

VOLUME II

Indian Poetry Today

ENLARGED REVISED EDITION

GENERAL EDITOR

KESHAV MALIK

HINDI POETRY

Editor: KAILASH VAJPEYI

KANNADA POETRY

Editor: S.K. DESAI

MARATHI POETRY

Editor: PRABHAKAR MACHWE

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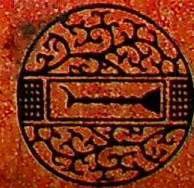
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कृपया पुस्तक के ऊपर कोई निशान आदि
न लगायें।

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INDIAN POETRY TODAY
(*Enlarged Revised Edition*)

Volume II

Hindi
Kannada
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VOLUME II

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KESHAV MALIK

HINDI POETRY

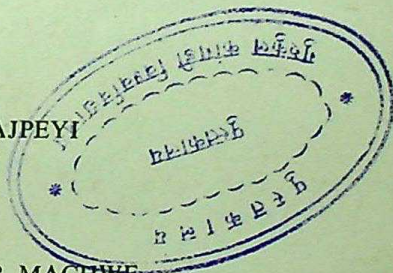
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Publisher's Preface to the First Edition

The Indian Council for Cultural Relations is an autonomous organization under the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, founded in 1950 with the object of establishing and strengthening cultural relations and mutual understanding between India and other countries. As part of its publication programme directed towards this cultural dialogue between India and other countries, the Council publishes, among other things, quarterlies in English (*Indian Horizons*), Arabic (*Thaqafat-ul-Hind*), Spanish (*Papeles de la India*) and French (*Rencontre Avec l'Inde*). The Council also publishes an illustrated quarterly digest of cultural events entitled *Cultural News from India*, *Africa Quarterly* and *ICCR Newsletter* (a quarterly bulletin for foreign students studying in India).

The present anthology is the second volume in a planned series which will cover the contemporary literary scene in India. Volume one contains renderings in English of Bengali, Punjabi and Tamil poetry. Each volume will present in English the best modern poetry translated from three or four languages covered in that particular volume. In the section devoted to the poetry of each language, the Editor's Introduction is followed by the selected poems and brief biographical notes on the poets included. This series, as a whole, parallels our proposed publication of anthologies of the best modern short stories translated from various Indian languages. When all volumes in both series are published, it is expected that this publication venture, as a whole, will present a detailed picture of the best contemporary writing in the various Indian languages in creative prose and verse.

General Editor's Note on the Revised Edition

Ten years have gone by since the first edition of this out-of-print volume was published. In this new and revised edition, on the suggestion of readers, we include the work of some more poets in each of the languages represented in the volume. Some of these poets have come into prominence during the intervening period or have shown much promise. But here or there an eminent writer, who otherwise needs no introduction but whose work may interest those who cannot possibly know it in its original languages, has also been included. For the rest we have strictly adhered to the criteria of selection originally laid down by the editors of the volume. We realize that still some more names could have been included, but the difficulties of obtaining good translations in a short time prevented us from doing so. Translation of poetry, as one knows, is less than adequate but what way is there, than to undertake it, if a poet is to be introduced to a much wider readership ?

KESHAV MALIK

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HINDI POETRY

Editor : KAILASH VAJPEYI

Introduction to the First Edition

This anthology of modern Hindi poetry is for a class of readers who, inspite of the language barrier, want to read poetry of other literatures also. Such readership can exist anywhere in the world. Although no formal introduction is necessary to these poems, yet it is possible that, besides the poems, some readers would be interested in acquainting themselves with the development of modern sensibility in Hindi poetry.

Hindi, since its inception has been the language of revolt. Centuries ago, it served as an apt medium of expression for the great secular poet Kabir. In the twentieth century Nirala, another major Hindi poet has used it with equal competence. The translation of Kabir's poetry is available in all the important languages of the world. But in the case of Nirala, even his own countrymen took a long time to recognize his genius. Nirala died in the early sixties, after a long illness. For a long time prior to his death he had been existing in a state of complete nervous breakdown. His wife and only daughter were already dead. So his legacy to the world was his poetry. He started his poetic career as a lyrical romantic poet, wrote ten volumes of poems, two collections of short stories, three novels and many essays and yet was not recognized as one of the most important literary figures of his time that he was. Although he aroused a lot of controversy

and became a legend in his lifetime, due to his life-style rather than his literary genius. In retrospect his outrageous behaviour as an individual emerges as one with his poetry, i.e., a continuous struggle against the literary and social tyranny of the times. Around 1939 he wrote poems like 'Poison Ivy' and 'Toadstool' which were published in the early forties. The critics of contemporary Hindi poetry have, for the first time, admitted that the poetry written in the past fifteen years had its beginnings in Nirala's 'Toadstool'.

This was the period when Romanticism in Hindi poetry was at its decline. Poets like Pant, for example, had already begun to realize that Romanticism, had exhausted its possibilities. In his editorial of *Roopabh* in July 1938 he said : "The realism of our age has acquired such terrifying dimensions that the roots of our ideas and imagination, embedded in our ancient beliefs have been shaken...and in order to nourish these roots now poetry has to depend upon hard soil." The turmoil and the transitional character of the time was reflected in the formation of various groups of poets with diverse ideologies. The group consisting of Bachchan, Anchal, Narendra Sharma and Bhagwati Charan Verma, although continuing the tradition of Romanticism, introduced a notable change in their use of language by replacing the highly 'Sanskritized' phraseology of earlier romantic poetry, with the language of everyday use. Out of all these poets Bachchan succeeded in establishing a special rapport with the masses, due to his flexible use of the spoken idiom.

Many writers and critics had by now found in Marx an appropriate answer to all the social evils of the time and under the influence of his philosophical guidance they formed a "Progressive Writers' Association." It was the publication of an article entitled 'The Necessity for a Progressive Literature in India' by Shivdan Singh Chauhan, in *Vishal Bharat* in March 1937, which inspired many poets of Romantic and post-Romantic movements to change their themes and style of writing poetry. For instance, in Sumitra Nandan Pant's

'Yugant', 'Yugvani' and 'Gramya' one can immediately see that the sympathy for the exploited class and the images from rural India, are the result of a kind of obsession with the doctrine of Karl Marx. The same holds true of Narendra Sharma's 'Mitti Aur Phool' and Anchal's 'Lal Choonar'. Although in theory these poets seem to be convinced that dialectical materialism is the only answer to the problems of tradition-ridden Indian society, yet their poetry does not appear to be completely free from Romantic nuances.

In the Progressive poetry of Hindi, themes of patriotism and social diversities coexist. The deplorable condition of farmers and workers arouses a flood of sympathy in these poets; and their poetry seems to stand on the hard ground of reality but there are poets like Rangeya Raghav whose entire bulk of poetry is about the theory of Marx. Among the poets who identified themselves with the ideology of communism were, Ram Vilas Sharma, Kedar Nath Agrawal and Nagarjun. Shivmangal Singh Suman's sensibility also found expression through similar themes.

In Hindi the sources of symbolism of Romantic poets were nature and mythology, whereas Progressives repeatedly used symbols like 'Hammer', 'Scyth', 'Red Star' and the 'Hoe' to such an extent that they became hollow cliches. The basic weakness of the Progressive poets in Hindi was that they continuously kept using a narrow range of themes and symbols and never tried to gain a universal perspective. Another peculiar trait of Progressive poetry in Hindi was that, inspite of being historically apt for its times, it was so completely borrowed from outside that it could never fully find expression through the native idiom. Thus it was that this movement died before it could find complete expression.

It was also the period, when the national freedom movement in India had aroused patriotic feelings amongst another group. Apart from Maithili Sharan Gupta, an old stalwart, there were such young poets like Dinkar, Navin and Sohan Lal Dwivedi, who also felt the need for change but not through

any borrowed ideology.

Dinkar, in the introduction to 'Raswanti' clearly said: "To me progress is the synonym of 'Newness' and not of 'Communism'."

However, against these cross-currents of poetry of the times, Nirala's 'Toadstool' stands alone. It not only laughs at the language of Romantic poetry but also at the cheap and simplified progressive trends. His is the only consciousness that can be said to have been aware at that time, of the transitional nature of current beliefs. He knew that neither of the existing schools of poetry caught and expressed the true undercurrent of national turmoil. In that sense he was at least a quarter century ahead of his times. It was the inherent irony and the sense of the absurd in his poems which gave a new guideline to Hindi poetry and now when the Romantics and Progressives are all forgotten, Nirala continues to be a source of inspiration to each new poet.

It would be relevant to mention here the name of *Tar Saptak*—an anthology of seven poets: Gajanan Madhav Muktibodh, Ram Vilas Sharma, Nemi Chand Jain, Bharat Bhushan Agarwal, Girija Kumar Mathur, Agyeya and Prabhakar Machwe—which was edited and brought out by Agyeya. It is important to note that when it claimed in its introduction to have collected what it called 'poetry with new experiments' it aroused controversy. The poems included in this anthology were different because of their new symbols, new similes and pattern of images, yet this anthology was not received sympathetically specially by the critics of the old school.

The charges against experimentalists were that the idea of this type of anthology had been derived from the West (Reference: *New Signatures*, *New Country* and *New Writing in Europe*, etc.), that the claims made by the editor were not reflected in the poems collected in this anthology, that the poetic experience of these poets is individualistic and egocentric, and that they lacked communicability.

The charges were a little exaggerated, but it should not be forgotten that any experiment is bound to arouse some hostility. Out of the seven poets, a few never wrote anything in future, whereas others did make a mark in the realm of literature.

The last thirty years are significant in the history of India as this is the period following the end of the second World War. During this period the third world emerged and countries like India achieved freedom after centuries of slavery and mass exploitation.

The new Hindi poetry, like poetry anywhere in modern times, is the product of a special set of circumstances peculiar to this century. However besides external conditions, internal factors are also responsible for the formation of this sensibility. It is self-evident that any change in literature does not occur in a vacuum. A whole historical process is necessary to mould the sensibility of a creative writer. The first half of this century saw two World Wars and their catastrophic consequences, which produced a new set of values. Thinkers all over the world felt that technology had taken away more than it had given to mankind. And, that...humanity had arrived at a point where earlier definitions had ceased to have meaning.

It is evident that the creative writer in post-independence India did not escape the consequences of this world-wide anxiety. The Wars had already upset the ethical and economic balance of the country. Independence brought with it two further complications: one, the division of the country; and two, the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. Both these tragic events compelled the conscientious people of India to reassess their convictions regarding religion and tolerance. Although it is true that even during British rule, in India, the intelligentsia had already recognized the importance of humanitarianism in place of religious dogmas, the current circumstances turned even more people towards secularism. The mass exodus of refugees, the rising cost of living and resultant poverty, politics

of nations and rapidly deteriorating ethical standards inside the country, compelled the creative artist to relocate himself amidst these evils. In pre-independence India the focal point of the entire nation was the achievement of freedom but after becoming free, the creative artist in general, in order to widen his perspective, made an intense effort to acquaint himself with the philosophy, literature and art movements of other lands. The Hindi writer had already been exposed as an artist to the influence of Freud, Eliot, Shaw and Lawrence, etc. Now Soren Kierkegaard, Kafka, Rimbaud, Jung, Hulme, Jaspers, Sartre, Mallarme and Camus, etc. also became familiar figures to him. Western literary and art movements, like Imagism, Surrealism, Symbolism, etc. became popular topics of discussion. About this time, in 1951, *Doosara Saptaak* containing the poems of Shamsheer Bahadur Singh, Bhawani Prasad Mishra, Hari Narain Vyas, Naresh Mehta, Dharamvir Bharati, Raghuvir Sahay and Shakunt Mathur was brought out by Agyeya.

Four poets : Shamsheer Bahadur, Bhawani Prasad, Bharati and Raghuvir Sahay from this collection, emerged as significant creative artists, who were basically concerned with the destiny of man. Shamsheer had already made a mark because of his symbolism and compressed imagery. Bhawani Prasad with his Gandhian philosophy, simplified language to the extent, where his poetry became a direct and face to face dialogue with the common man.

After a gap of three years, in 1954, a magazine called *Nai Kavita*, was brought out by the new poets of Allahabad. This marked the beginning of a new movement, now known as new poetry in Hindi. Through *Nai Kavita*, the young authors made a collective effort to establish the image of free man with all his human weaknesses in poetry. At this time the first significant collection of poems to be published was 'Chakraviewh' by Kunwar Narain. He used extremely terse language to juxtapose mythological references in today's context.

Muktibodh, who had already made a name for himself as an important poet of *Tar Saptak*, now wrote a long poem entitled 'In darkness.*' Some critics have interpreted this poem in terms of existential philosophy : the loneliness of the self, the sense of guilt and the loss of identity, etc. Somehow this critical interpretation does not seem to reach the truth, as Muktibodh was essentially inspired by Marxism. He was close to the people. He worked with them and knew the seamy side of life at close quarters. Like Nirala, Muktibodh also died in a state of complete nervous breakdown after a long illness in the sixties. During these years, Dharamvir Bharati, with the help of a wide historical perspective, raised many questions relevant to our times.

In the fifties one finds significant literary activity going on in the field of Hindi poetry. A number of anthologies and cooperative literary ventures occupy the scene during this decade. *Nae Patte*, *Nikash*, *Sanket*, *Kavitayen* and *Teesara Saptak* are some of the examples in this direction. During this time, like the experimentalists of the early forties, there came a literary manifesto from Patna under the leadership of Dr Nalin Vilochan Sharma, Naresh and Kesari Kumar, giving a new name 'Nakenvaad' to the type of poetry they were writing. Since 'Nakenvaad' laid too much emphasis on form, it did not leave any impact.

It may be said that the process of development of the new sensibility in Hindi has been very rapid. Twenty years earlier the range of poetry was limited to a few selected themes. But by the end of the fifties we find that it had widened to include very subtle shades and nuances of modern life, especially that of the cities. All those topics that were earlier almost unheard of in poetry now began to attract public

* Other significant long poems of Hindi poetry, written in recent years are : "Mukti Prasang" by Rajkamal Chaudhari ; "Lukman Ali" by Soumitra Mohan ; "Asaddha Veena" by Agyeya ; and "Pat Katha" by Dhoomil

notice, through the intellectual reactions of the new poets. However from the point of view of poetic form, it would not be irrelevant to mention a new factor, this being the almost fanatic obsession of some poets with images. Due to this, the quality of a good poem in Hindi, for a long time, was determined by the number of its images. This attitude to imagism ignored some truly good new poetry and encouraged the movement of the new lyric in which the lyricists continued to write poetry for the sake of inventing images. Here it would be relevant to point out that though today's new Hindi poetry is mostly thought-provoking and in free verse, yet there are some poets who continue to write and recite lyrical poetry, in the tradition of Bachchan. Rama Nath Awasthi, Ramavatar Tyagi, Rahi and Virendra Mishra are some notable poets of this group.

However, the spell of imagism was first broken through the publication of Raghuvir Sahay's *Atmahattya Ke Viruddha*. Through an undistorted use of realistic diction, the poems of this collection proved that the language of everyday use can depict the dichotomy and irony of modern life more forcefully than the involved use of imagery. In his very individual style Raghuvir Sahay proved that the backbone of poetry is not imagery, but words and their proper usage.

Human concern, dichotomy and contradictions, protest against anything that is opposed to human dignity, irony, self-mockery, anguish and secular thinking, etc., all these tenets of the modern sensibility, if recorded chronologically, were evident, even earlier, in the poems of Sarveshwar Dayal Saxena and Girija Kumar Mathur. What is lacking in these poets is restraint. Shrikant Verma on the contrary has a firmer grasp of the contradictions and complexities of human relationships. His poems also leave an immediate impression, whereas the impact of Kunwar Narain's poetry is slower but longer lasting.

In the sixties we find another interesting feature in new Hindi poetry, the credit or the discredit for which is given to

the poems of *Sankrant*, published in 1964, by Kailash Vajpeyi. *Sankrant* contained poems notable for their sharpness, directness and anger verging on violence. These poems not only exposed contemporary evils but also attacked every rotten agency that was responsible for decay and chaos all over.

In 1967, when Kailash's second collection *Dehant Se Harkar* was brought out, *Alochana*, a magazine of literary criticism in its December 1967 issue, commented : "It cannot be denied that...at the time of the publication of his first collection 'Sankrant', Vajpeyi was the only poet who was recognizable for his very special grasp of the modern situation. Those poems had anger, hatred, cruelty and violence which earned him not only a new class of readers but also an entire battalion of poets who followed and copied him blindly. But not one amongst these could take this violence to the degree of poetic excellence which was evident in Kailash's poems."

This specifically referred to poets who claimed through the publication of a new magazine called *Akavita* (antipoetry) to recognize the need for an absolutely detached sensibility, in the face of repetitiveness of the current poets. The main poets of this group were Shyam Parmar, Jagdish Chaturvedi, Leeladhar Jagori and Soumitra Mohan.

Many parallel groups to the *Akavita* group have since emerged. Some of them are : Bhokhi Pidhi (hungry generation), Digambar Pidhi (naked generation) and Yuyutsavadis (poets who intend to wage war). Negativism, discontent and even direct abuse has been accepted as a medium of expression by the poets of these groups.

The important names which emerged in the sixties were : Raghuvir Sahay, Kunwar Narain, Shrikant Verma, Sarveshwar Dayal Saxena, Kailash Vajpeyi, Vijay Dev Narain Sahi and Kedar Nath Singh. In the beginning of the seventies, an important collection by Dhoomil, called *Sansad Se Sarak Tak* was brought out. When analysed, it is easy to trace

the influence of poets of the earlier decade. He had imbibed many of their salient features and created a new idiom for himself. Unfortunately, Dhoomil died of brain tumour, while he was still in his thirties.

The Hindi poet today is more than ever aware of the irony that 'poetry makes nothing happen', yet he is continuing to voice the problems of the masses in an almost naked language. Sulky resentment, abhorrence for everything which is phoney and fake, self-analysis, cogitation and sharp criticism of the dichotomies of Indian social life, are the main characteristics of today's Hindi poetry. But this does not mean that the progressive disintegration of civilization is not his concern.

In fact, through his own society, the Hindi poet is squarely facing world problems. Sometimes, through symbols and, at other times directly, he has been depicting the horrors and contradictions that are gradually poisoning life on earth. Wherever human dignity suffers a setback, the poet is affected. In no sense is he isolated or cut off from life in general. The range of his awareness is vastly comprehensive yet the propelling force of all his art is the fact that in the politically divided nations of the world, he is citizen of a deprived world.

KAILASH VAJPEYI

BHARAT BHUSHAN AGARWAL

Without a Body

This evening when I was home
a strange thing happened:
nobody paid the slightest attention to me.
My wife did not come and ask if I wanted tea,
the children, too, stayed in the other room;
the servant, with great impudence,
went on sweeping the floor
as if I wasn't there.

Well, am I here or am not?

And then, all of a sudden, awareness
mixed with astonishment.
Where is my body today ?
I started to turn on the radio—
my hands were gone.
I began to speak—
no mouth !

As I tried to look—
O God! I had no eyes!
I was thinking—but it seemed that my head was
missing.

Well then...
How did I get home?

Little by little I understood:
by mistake I had left my head in the office when I
started for home.
My hands are still hanging from the bus-strap.
My eyes—of course, they are back there peering into
the files;
my mouth is glued to the telephone.
And my feet...there is no doubt...they are still
standing in a queue.
So that is how I got home today, without a body.

The concept of a bodiless life, after all,
is the essence of the Indian tradition.
But, is the weariness
which weighs down this limbless me
also a part of it?

Translated by R.O. SWAN and C.S. JOSSAN

Cut

No, this was no cut received on the public highway;
I had even stirred outdoors, days on end. Locked
indoors I would weave (and if not weave then what?)
a web of words—its threads drawn not from my
heart or head but from the fluttering leaves of books
scattered all around me.

No wonder I was a little anxious; feeling as though I
were a weaver and my desk a loom; repeatedly

awaiting the completion of each eight hour, hoping that the gong would strike and, that, wiping the sweat off my brow I would advance homewards.

But delivered the cut without doubt was. My body went blue. The tangled threads on my fingers became the more tangled. I saw myself reeling like a drunken top.

And then I said to myself 'there is that one spelled the turtle! If only I was that turtle. Me, so sturdy a biped!—and yet imprisoned in an iron fist. Me? Whom the slightest hurt will stick like a penny stamp. Oh, if only I were turtle, I will retreat into the protective dark of self where no unexpected blow can ever find me. Then the foe would vainly seek me. Vainly go round and round me, like I...baffled... now orbit around it.'

And thinking thus I laughed, visualizing a would-be spectacle. But at once the laughter turned into terror for a voice within mocked, 'Who do you speak to, you only question self and which "may be" is a mere fad; what proof is there you are not a turtle after all, that same turtle who delights reposing in a hole in a river. Yes, what proof that you are in your body, that you exist in what clothes you. It may indeed be that the turtle has made home in the body, that you are in that turtle.'

And now I emphatically said, because I was I and the turtle turtle, and in between us an easy converse, 'Proof I have none, except for that cut that I have received and that I could not be the recipient of were I a turtle.'

And thinking may be I'm not here but in that turtle
added, 'Yes, what proof there even of that, the turtle
does not feel a cut, on condition that the cut has
been delivered not from outside but within.'

Translated by KESHAV MALIK

KEDAR NATH AGRAWAL

Freedom of the Writer

Whether you keep your dog tied
with a chain or a rope,
take him out with you
or let him remain in the room
feed him specially or throw him the left-over food
make him sleep on the floor
or on the mattress;
the dog is yours,
how is it any of our concern to raise objections
or make an announcement of his freedom.
You are the master of your clocks
just as you are your dog's master—
these which you keep tied
with either a thread or a golden lead,
these which you keep tight with laces,
these which you keep hanging from a nail—
these clocks are yours,
how is it any of our concern to raise objections,
or make an announcement of their freedom.
But we are writers—not dogs or clocks—
the sculptors of man's soul,
we are the descendants of those

whose head is held high,
 whose heart is gold,
 whose creation still shines,
 whose honour could never be bought
 at any price,
 whose pride did not bow to power;

Therefore we deeply dislike all those ties
 tied by which
 we lose our originality,
 because of which
 we become the lackeys of power,
 because of which
 we become the flatterers of power,
 because of which we lose strength—
 tenderness and firmness of life,
 because of which we lose contact with the masses,
 we are bored with ourselves and the whole world,
 therefore unified in body and breath
 we say :
 the descendants of Tulsi,
 Soor and the descendants of Kabir—

Do not buy the writer of today with money,
 do not rear him in the shadow of the dome of royalty,
 do not instruct or order him;
 do not stop him from telling the truth;
 give him the freedom to write
 forthrightly,
 so that he defends
 farmer and worker,
 and shows no leniency with the tyrant,
 so that he may keep the doom
 and the autumn at a distance,
 so that he may keep the earth clean
 so that he may give men

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meaning and words,
so that he may give men
pride and courage,
so that he may form his country anew.

Translated by APU VAJPEYI

HARIVANSH RAI BACHCHAN

A Poem Sequence

Night's last quarter,
the stars twinkling brighter.

I, holding the age to my ribs' cage,
astride the sandy verge.

Goes past the fury of a gale,
decomposing the parting in my hair.

From the fathoms, mysterious the calls—
whole oceans rushing to fill in the void.

Echoes of those very calls,
then reverberate in my heart.

And renewed
are the rumblings from the depths.

There is no staying back on beach, from them
on whom the tides break their news.

* * *

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We shall have to put up with it all.

Human under sway of land,
land under unseen hand,
unseen hand also moving at mysterious back and call.

We shall have to put up with it all.

What we stand on is a semblance of land.
Ocean it is through and through, and then sand.
Comes no more than a heave and then see our rise and
headlong fall.

We shall have to bear it all.

Get to know how we are,
touch to feel how frail how frail
Quite as the world has lived thus far,
so too we—short and tall.

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We shall have to bear it all.

* *

The day arrows to its demise.

Fearing, lest light dim en route
(though the end be not far)
the milestone weary traveller too hurries.

The day arrows to its demise.

“It is late, the little ones in anxious wait
will be peeping out of the nest.”
With such thought the sparrow’s wings beat fast.

The day arrows to its demise.



"Is any still restless to meet self?—
ought self be fond of any."

Such nonsense rhyme makes the heart sink in darkest doubt.

The day arrows to its demise.

* * *

I rove here and I rove there
in the fashion of a man becrazed.
Great the joy, greater mirth,
with each step on a turning earth.

Men hear me, and fall in trance
bow in praise or swing into dance—
for there I go, blowing the trumpet
that instills into them the life romance.

Translated by KESHAV MALIK

ASHOK BAJPEYI

Absence

Evening,
the last rays
head-on-the-knees sits a girl
indifferent,
to the children's huge merriment about her,
and indifferent,
to the words I quietly place
so close to her, my love
my words
which can
only illumine her wretched poverty but can
give it no meaning at all.

Far away at the bus-stop
people
with their daily phrases, waiting
within a yellow square of sun:
their dry eyes shine
again and again
with hellish dreams.
Suddenly the dark
encroaches

silently—
and with the dark
buses thundering
one after the other.

I realize with a start—
the old temple which peeped
behind the glittering skyscrapers
is no more.

The people leave.
The girl
is also gone.
Far away in a hut
someone
shouts out to a child.

My words—
I do not know
where are they?

Translated by MRINAL PANDEY

In Bhilai

Even there, where
the stretched-out
long and burning hands of iron
are chopped off by the machine,
I'll sleep soundly,
and without getting nabbed by a nightmare
wake to the wealth of sun
as usual.

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All your words and gestures may fade
 but I'll remember you;
 in an endless summer
 the sense of seasons will be lost
 and yet I'll recognize
 those fragrant days
 when your fresh youth blooms in my arms.
 A deadening noise will be all around
 and my heart like melted incandescent iron
 will flow towards you
 in numberless streams:
 and quietly, you will mould it
 into happiness.

Then one night
 your blood and your heart and
 your love
 will grow heavy like the steel,
 and then I shall call you
 from beneath the railway-trains
 carrying people and coal
 from behind the lampposts
 keeping watch over tranquil towns:

the earth will be dumb
 like a dark and heavy fear,
 and the overhanging sky
 be still like death.

My innumerable parts will wait
 for you
 at the machine-gate.

Translated by the POET

DHARAMVIR BHARATI

To the Reader

Search not for me in these poems, these fictions
these alleys that I have passed through.
This cast off slough.

I am not important nor is art.
There is a third, greater truth
for the realization of which
my soul has burned long
and slowly, over the flames of
life's sacrificial fire.

It may be that you: unidentified friend;
may reach before me the object of my quest.
For you too knowing or unknowing,
head that way.

When through long alleys of pain and suffering and conflict
you reach the portals
of that same Truth
and in its benign shadow
are anointed
then (if you remember)

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look for me amongst the flowers of worship;
scattered at your feet: I.

Search not for me in these poems, these fictions.

Translated by KAILASH VAJPEYI

Achievement

I did not live.
Life lived me
drop by drop it drained me
and left me on the wayside
like an empty cup.

Did I burn?
The fire deceived me.
I never did fully melt
but with a little heat
was twisted like a delicate candle.

Look at me!
I am that Sun
which was shattered by
the darkness in the midst of its glory.

One Sentence

The cheque-book:
may it be yellow or red.

The price:
coins or fame;
tell all those
who have come to buy thee
'Every hungry man is not for sale'.

Translated by APU VAJPEYI

JAGDISH CHATURVEDI

Dots, No Lines

Tree trunks shuddering in the tides of winds,
the foundations of megalopolis too are seized
as though by an acute ague

Someone writes re-written someone's name
throughout a long night,
and lets it slip out of mind as day breaks

As he—solitary, glance fixed on ground below—
passes by on a path buried under
a scattering of shrivelling leaves

Sunlight sprawls silently, as pariah dogs rear
on their haunches and rail at tall mansions
in fits of endless tedious debate

I pick up a burnt-out cigar off the pavement
and placing my head on my knees
re-light it to a semblance of life

A cold breath descends from the dome of an empty sky
and no matter which way, from it away I back
it instantaneously makes its monotonous message heard

Foxily the night escapes in stealth into dense foliage,
while beneath my skin is felt the stinging
of a hundred needles of finest point.

In desolation meandering a fugitive shadow is observed—
impatient as if to submit,
to human bondage

The sky parts
at once its big mouth spits out
a shower of incandescent sparks

And now, I dig my toes in my threadbare shoes and plod
towards alleys in whose pervasive dark—
not long ago—I would not have been caught dead.

Translated by KESHAV MALIK

SNEHMAYI CHAUDHARI

A State of Mind

Even as my uncertain soul—
with nostalgia sick—
is possessed with the urge
to rummage
through the scrapes, the verses
of its own restless conception,
time and again
time and again
it wanders
stretching out in an incessant quest
of the proffered hand.

Strange circumstance :
a loaded firmament,
neither bursting forth
nor truly breaking open.

The great big town
has turned into a single, claustrophobic cell,
with every window
every skylight barred.

When a trail of zigzagging smoke
 rises
 and becomes another dark patch
 of overbearing cloud,
 I sit down to write to my ageing father :
 my clamped solitude
 for brother, sister and grey-haired mother
 spills into the word.

I can see
 how the gardener
 endeavouring to fix young shoots
 has collected with meticulous care
 blossoms of every shade
 every conceivable definition
 into a homely knot.

I wonder why
 because of what elusive insufficiency,
 the dew-drenched grass,
 upon which I now sit
 begins to dampen more and still more :

Even as dry leaves
 from the pipal tree
 have been gathering around me
 with the stealthy rustle of autumn.

Translated by B. N. RAINA

CHANDRAKANT DEOTALA

What Time Is It ?

To slip on *these days*—
to one's shame—
is to go naked.

To strip them off
is to commit suicide
one that has become so difficult,
when one has no shame.

The lines on the palm
have melted
and are dripping
on the corpse of a land,

the tower clocks
have turned their backs
on the city.

What time is it?—
You can't tell,
only some parts of the machine
grope in the fog.

Translated by RATAN CHOUHAN

DHOOMIL

A Poem

She knows how many men
have been stripped stark naked
from mere words;
and now people are blank towards
killings...a mere routine.

She was born of a
vagabond's boredom but
she has eloped to the city
with a literate person.

Even before puberty,
copulating...she realized:
love is
a search for an apartment
in a human swarm
even while getting drenched
in an unabated downpour.
She learnt
every girl becomes an inn
accessible to all wayfarers
after the third abortion;

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a poem
after the third reading.

No it's useless to look for meaning
in the secret codes of prostituted language
in the bullock-pissing postulates
all useless.

But, if possible, you may tell the man passing by
'Here is your face, Mister
you lost it midst the processionists!'

It is enough for the time being.

Long back there was a time when—
somewhere in the wilderness even
a man's animality gave out a shriek and
the entire habitation quaked.

But now she knows
a poem is a brief monologue
of a man confounded, beset
and gone berserk.

Translated by AJIT KHULLAR

RAMDHARI SINGH DINKAR

Six Excerpts

The secret speech is lost,
the saying of the unsayable;

ranting and nauseam
you forget the burnished gold
that is silence.

(Neel Kusam)

* * *

Reflect, remembering
that the rhythm of your unbroken meditation
instills life in generations yet unborn.

Come, quicken your steps
secure in the fact
that the movement of your thought
echoes in the ear-drums
of ages far beyond the horizon.

(Urvashi)

* * *

Our investment?
fistful of dreams
planted in the fields of air.

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And returns?
a thousand flowers
waving in the spaces of the heavens.

(Neel Kusam)

* * *

Ocean, how may I heed your thunderous lore,
who himself am the time-trumpet's deafening roar?

(Hunkar)

* * *

The lurid flames of febrile delusions
reduce the chiselled profile of truth to a lie;
chaos sucks an earth—of clean outlines,
deep into the formless void.

(Urvashi)

* * *

How unseen the movement, so still the growth
the great banyan of time comes up with a green leaf
in the course of centuries.

(Rashmirath)

Translated by KESHAV MALIK

LEELADHAR JAGOORI

The Show Is On

The contrasting world you see
is called complexity.
Adam is not with it, as
much as with his colloquy.

At the rear of the non-stop reval
clamour sounds like a chorus
but if you listen with care
you'll hear a sinister-sounding instrument
harping upon our indigence and ignorance
—much as we harp upon our culture ;
it transmutes the pleas from the outer
world into a unlikely rhapsody.

No thing is being born and yet
you all continue harping in despite.
At such moments I feel
I too had better relish, colloquially,
the taste of being
by taking a header for the lower rungs ;

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And from the formidable upper rungs
 I should much against my palate
 all the confounded tastes
 from versifying to vasectomy.
 Whenever I sense so
 there rises forthwith the tail
 of a query or a cow.

After searching and shifting it were said
 the problem is ill-besieged,
 the party the lone point of reference
 nor the people.
 Therefore erasing the line
 between life and personal computations
 the scene has been shelved
 the one about sympathy, about civility;
 the rest of the show
 goes on as it ever has.

If ever the curtain goes up
 I shall demonstrate my readiness;
 if it never does
 I shall, like many another
 plead my growing incapacity
 to know, to comprehend.

Translated by AJIT KHULLAR

KAMLESH

The Deceived

They left at night, the riders—
We, who had followed them to the marshes
with our lanterns
returned
listening long after to the hoof-beats die away.
We fell asleep
and dreamt the whole night through.

Our journey was mere circling round
the edges of an island, we wandered
looking for a lake
whose cool waters
we could cup in our palms and drink, where
on the ancient stones
we could sharpen our rusty weapons gone blunt ;
our horses needed
vast pastures
to graze, unrestrained.
All our ancestors
their ankles strung with stones
hung down a well,
clutching to the roots of a banyan tree;

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while wild mice
 kept nibbling at those precious roots
 and the hour of final plunge
 drew near.

Who were they we saw off—
 at the marshes as the night was on the wane ?
 Who were the ancestors—
 hanging from those precarious roots
 and when does history
 turning into vicious mice,
 begin to destroy our sole supports
 in the hour of pain ?

After all, why did we leave
 those riders on the marsh ?
 And where are the secrets
 they should have brought back ?

Translated by MRINAL PANDEY

The Dead Folk

They await.
 Skeletons raise their arms in the sky,
 dead souls dance
 in a ring.

Like withered leaves
 people are borne
 by the winds
 and drift into the ring.

Dark nothingness
and the ankle bells
jingle in our mind.
As if
a part of you already stands
hand in hand with
skeletons
dancing there in the sky.

They
are bowing to the statue,
you are slowly turning into...
As you mourn another death.

They
are dancing.
For tomorrow you too
will be borne aloft like the leaves to sink
withering
into the ring.

Translated by MRINAL PANDEY

KEDARNATH KOMAL

Sons

Generation after generation after generation
in darkness
we lie wide awake
we
the sons of the sun !

Translated by the POET

AJIT KUMAR

At Last

At last when I die
and (if)
the obituary is published
in some local paper;
Mr 'A', will say
after reading:
'Lo! he was alive till now'.
Or who knows
in place of 'Lo'
he say 'So'
taking care, in his use of the word.
Suddenly
his tea
will become tastier
Analysing a few
epithets like, famous, established, new
and becoming generous
to the dead person.
Far
there on the bank of some river
blooming in the pyre

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a flower will disappear
after the said touch of generosity.
Despite his sobriety
and tolerance
had Mr 'A'
been present;
he would have been tormented
at the vulgarity
of such disappearance.

Translated by KAILASH VAJPEYI

PRABHAKAR MACHWE

Pets

At first he had a few pups
they grew up and strayed away.

Then he had some kittens
he gave them away to neighbours.

He had red fish as pets
they died.

Then, he had a parrot—
One day when it was out of the cage
the neighbour's cat picked it up.

In this way his habit
of keeping pets did not die.

Now we hear he has human pets
(abundant, redundant);

Probably the neighbour's bombs
will take care of them

Even so they will show no sign
of diminishing in numbers.

Translated by the POET

GIRIJA KUMAR MATHUR

The Night of Ravenous Hair

Ah, the shadow of your dark black magic has pervaded
my being :
within me your body keeps time
to the tune of some wild song's floating melody.
Even during sleep its echoes
reverberate ;
and in the same place its melody pulsates.

Ah, the shadow of your wonder has permeated my
world :
My calm eyes see
strange fantasies and things
receding into the distance
acquire a new meaning.
Dust settling on age lifts up
as the incomplete monument
within myself
moves towards consummation.
In this exhausting boredom of superfluous work
you with the night of flowering hair, suddenly come...

Ah, you are the flower clinging to my colourless
lonely existence :
my words like fragrance
hang upon your arms.
My colourful words are but the imprints
of your lips.
The intensity of my voice
reflects the warmth of your rising desires.
In this emptiness
this denuded time...
you are a pungent taste
lingering in me...

Ah, you are a dark shadow pervading my being...

Translated by TAVISHI TIWARI

BHAWANI PRASAD MISHRA

Even the Sun is Not Alone

I

An evening, flows like love
daring, uncalculating.
And the day
stretched on the tall mountain tops
seems to count the beams;
of some ceiling!
Darkness is crowding.
The multicoloured veil of the evening's dark face
is coming down.

II

What are you brooding over?
Will you stay like that
right till the evening's end
fuddled with your little sorrow?
Would you let your imagination stray
in the dark?
Won't you rise
even if it be with reluctance?

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Won't you come down this high hill
you have seated yourself on?
Won't you be animated
more than your dead pulse?

III

Lay your head down
in the lap of the night!
Do not probe it through!
Normalize your breathing!
Do not make your eyes moist!
Behave as all others do!
Do not die so lonely
as this!

IV

Who told you
that yours is a different metal
than the common toiling lot?
As everybody imparts
everything of his
to his surroundings;
would you impart yours
to this green grass alone?
This grass
on which you haven't yet
wholeheartedly sat.

V

You wish
people should see you sitting
alone
on this green carpet you now possess;

and should list you
as something apart from the common lot.

VI

Both
that which you have sought to know
and that which you have proved by logic
impartable both!
This unshareable sorrow of yours
whom shall you share it with?

With the dawn?
But it is too busy!
You would keep fermenting it
the whole night
and reap little.
Whom would you give
this impartable
inseparable dream.
Though your own,
whom would you give
this vigourless, lifeless
lonely dream?

Nothing would be served
by being diplomatic about things;
or by remaining uncommitted.
Man lives
by living this world.
By bearing it through and through.

Even the sun is not alone
in its blazing existence—
would you like to be
something more than the sun?

Translated by R.S. YADAV

SOUMITRA MOHAN

The Other Reality

He stood near me—
looking at an elegant bike he said softly :
“It’s only the mad who move in a picture.”

I pushed aside the stone
and heard the creaking sound of the door

two cockroaches
—conversing for centuries
stared at me

I became breathless.

Viewing the reflection in countless colours
I turned back.

And pedelling the bike-stuck-to-a-spot
I struggled for the big leap

he pressed my hand, repeated :
“A man who moves in a picture is positively mad.”

Translated by GURBACHAN

GAJANAN MADHAV MUKTIBODH

The Ourang-outang

A dream within a dream.
A subtle, dense, stream of consciousness
within the consciousness.
Behind the stated fact, a music
perverse, discordant—
begging attention.
A mind within the mind.
And inside that, another chamber.
And in the chamber, a secret dungeon.
And in the black darkness of the dungeon
a strong box.

And in this heavy box is locked
a phantom—
or perhaps an ourang-outang
and I am afraid
afraid that this phantom might escape.

In the tastefully furnished
lighted study
when the discussions begin—
participating and listening carefully

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I suddenly discover
 in the sound and flow of my own words
 the outraged howling of the ourang-outang.
 And at once afraid I find my exposed heart
 soaked in sweat.

Oh ! let not the others know
 that, naked and twisted
 the symbol of a false power,
 this primaeval ourang-outang
 lies, hidden within me.

I pass my hand over my neck
 and feel suddenly a thick mane ;
 a growth of hair over my words
 and in my phrases the long nails
 of the ourang-outang.

I can almost see
 my thick bushy moustache
 turn into my poems.
 My own large teeth
 turn into logic.
 And I can clearly see
 my stunted forehead
 and hanging brow.
 And I am taken aback at my own self
 my hairy self.

And tortured by this monstrosity
 I quickly slam the lid
 and feel
 in my hands a pistol
 or perhaps a gun !!
 If this strong box were to open ;
 if the ourang-outang were to step out

I will let the bullets go.
 And then there will be blood
 spreading in all directions.
 The blood red blood of the ourang-outang.

At once I lock the box,
 the box is safely shut !!

I emerge from the dungeon
 cross many rooms
 and unseen
 enter my lighted study.
 And lo ! I am already sitting there.
 Participating in the current argument.

Busy in argument
 I think
 many levels
 many men
 behind this façade of truth and facts
 only wish to establish themselves
 and their ego.

I become speechless with terror
 and my brain turns alkaline
 and my eyes seek out
 the long, thick, mysterious tail
 hidden under the clothes of
 these debators.

And I think
 about the nature of these truths
 which wish to hide the long nails ! !
 And pity
 the victims of these nails.

Translated by **APU VAJPEYI**

A Single Shooting Star

A distant star
shoots through the blue of space.
Here, someone measures its speed,
records the rise and set.
But nothingness of space,
assumed to blue, must spell
an answer inaccessible.
To stretching scope
eye muscle's strain.

Astronomers describe
its pace and spatial shift ;
account for its time concealed
in tunnels of shade.
Yet it tracks only itself,
oblivious to sketch
and sketcher, eye and scope.

With equal speed
another lone star seems
to move across the space
of every man's heart.
So in moving out of shades
of evil, reining self,
riding the void,
each star
becomes the image
seeing
its own fearless offspring—

because of this
I shall put faith in every man,
in every man's son.

Translated by JAMES MAUCH

VISHNU NAGAR

Soap and Killer

The killer was in his tub
Soap-suds seeped through his eyelids into his eyes.

Killer threw the soap-bar away,
for soap could not be killed.

He rushed be-crazed to the market place.
Killed the man who had sold him soap.

Thereafter, with soap he washed the bloodied hands,
grew soft towards the soap, that killer.

The soap had started setting up a home inside,
a home inside the killer.

Translated by AJIT KHULLAR

KUNWAR NARAIN

The Ritual

An experience, in which
only I am
not different from others;
without others
I am (ineffectual?).
A nakedness of all
which I only
can see—not all.
And filled with genuine abhorrence
(genuine love perhaps has no substance)
feel
that I am capable
of becoming a torrent of stones...
If someone were to carry me
very high
and roll me down
from some mountain.
On the basis of that abhorrence
I collect
all the indolent people
around me.
And we all set out

looking for
 such a saint
 by hanging whose humble integrity
 we could prove
 the force of our integrity

Translated by APU VAJPEYI *and* J. THRONTON

A Poem

Around ten o'clock every day
 the same incident recurs.
 The same people, in the same way
 leaving their wives and children alone
 come out of their homes.
 Its no earthquake.
 While its growing dark,
 the same people
 return
 to the same homes,
 worn out, defeated
 appalled in gloom.

I know
 this way the earth won't rock.
 Nothing will happen this way.
 These people are sick od stiff
 because of some other reason.
 All these
 repeatedly, reaching the same conclusion
 already reached;
 will realize
 that falsehood is a fine art

and each man an artist;
 maddened through trying to give some meaning gladly
 not to the reality
 but to his reality.

Now and then
 while coming back home in the evening;
 the frightening glimpses
 of an abstract art
 burst from the sky
 in my mind.

As if
 grinding together
 all the discoloured men and things,
 someone had spread them on a flat surface.
 And against the apparent risk of blood
 all the suppressed colours
 of man
 had emerged on their own.

Translated by APU VAJPEYI and J. THURNTON

SHYAM PARMAR

Happening

It will HAPPEN
EVERYTHING will happen
WILL happen in full
that books didn't know
I'm sure, IT will happen—that
which periodicals failed to show.

Yea, IT will happen
without Nobody's premonition
nor Anybody's suggestion.
How strange that Ha ppEnIng would be
which many have foresaid crossing out each time
to say the incongruous will H A P P E N
WILL happen differently than what was meant.

Whatever has SAID prior to what is SAID
will HAPPEN.
Yea, SAID aside will remain
merely as SAID.

Translated by the POET

DIVIK RAMESH

Song

I cannot be an eyewitness
to truth
that does not belong to me.

All those impulses
invisible tortures—
the black waves
that surround me,
the eclipse on the
bright sunshine
is all mine, mine
for I have lived them all.

I'm not afraid
of this era hearing
another dead,

for it does not have
rickety shoulders
like Homo sapiens

but how can I
bear a load
which is not mine ?

I shall have to risk
bodies, still falling
upon other bodies.

Perhaps someday a ghost will be raised
from them
to be a question mark
based against the impotency of
a generation.

Then and only then
truth be unbounded,
be free.

Translated by SURESH DHINGRA

RAGHUVIR SAHAY

Laugh

Laugh; for you are under watch
laugh not at yourself for the bitterness in it
would give you away and they will get you.
Laugh; do not betray sheer joy as you do
for they may suspect you of being free
from the common guilt and they will get you.

Even as you laugh do not let anyone know what it is
at which you laugh
let them all believe that having lost your will
like others you laugh a known laughter like others
who laugh in lieu of their speech.

Speak to yourself you may while the high dome
reverberates
but remember to laugh when the echoes die
for if they found you silent they will get you on
charge of protest
but if you laugh last, they will
have the last laugh and
you will be able to get away.

Laugh ; but beware of wisecracks ; they are made of words
for they might carry in them a meaning given to them
a hundred years ago by someone else.

Would it not be better if you were to laugh
before and after you spoke
so that nothing that you say is taken seriously
or if you took care to laugh in all inevitable situations
such as the beating of the poor by the mighty
where none can be of help
except the poor themselves
and they too usually laugh.

Laugh. Laugh, be quick to laugh
laugh before the master leaves
shaking hands with him
lowering your eyes,
assuring him that you had laughed
yesterday when he was here.

Translated by the POET

The Stare

Today's lesson : common facts about death.
There are several, notes !
Death does not come to us all in the self-same manner
nor are the dead one in death
for they were not so before.
The body is the left-overs of struggle
incorporating in itself one battered eating bowl,
one soiled hair comb and the breakage within
the only element to escape being a cry

which in essence, is an undetermined internal matter
still under study.

In the end, we send it for printing.

Not the corpse but the cry—

in the very end it is turned out as a poem in a
vernacular

meant to be rendered into the world-wide English
tongue.

What were the words on my lips when I died.

Them, you seem to know better than I.

You wrote : I had said 'Help'

Maybe I had said 'Liberty'

now that I am gone I cannot remember.

When a living literate people pass through
a crisis of their own

with the object of giving direction to the crisis,
in a tribe of half-alive illiterates.

—you know how jocular the dead can be if so they wish—

yet I spare you the question :

what makes one hundred fat heads hang—

the load of wisdom ?

The weight of reverence ?

The burden of shame ?

No, I would continue to stare

at the one hundred bald pates in silence.

The fixed stare of my dead machine-gun.

Translated by the POET

Communication

Beg your leave, Superman.
 May I not join your entourage
 please, be advised, before the common supper
 I, mere poet, am a no-good-cook-and-cleaner.

You, no poet, would surely understand
 how utterly stupid it must be
 to face the people.
 And to claim familiarity with it
 one and at the same time.

I did try once
 and I said I loved the crowd.
 But my prose became a duet with a lilt,
 was left hanging over the heads
 of men on their asses.

Then came the national call for all
 to join Operation-Destruction-Idol
 there was choice :
 You could simply keep your hand raised and vote
 if you did not like to pound
 the party's hammer.

And they left with me a new idol in a packet
 in case I joined the racket.

Non-Poets-Please, you are better judges of my troubles—
 I'm busy building my image-a-day
 and then turning it into rubble,
 which activity you believe is writing poetry.

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I have no use
for other people's status.

Translated by the POET

VIJAY DEV NARAIN SAHI

Aquarium

I invite you
to that imagined window,
to press with your lips
the cold wall of glass.
It will make you be as pure as
the air atop a hill.

Across the window
you will find
two round eyes—
deep like the sky—
unwinking regarding you.
As you grope your way
up the wall
those eyes follow you.
Now you revert back,
with eyes downcast
pondering over the tender flowers,
white shells and evergreen leaves
blossoming in this closet.

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May, there be no anxiety
for those two eyes,
if you care to look at them,
would again gaze at you
without a blink
and whenever you will
you can slowly
walk upto the cold glass
and settle there against it
thirstless
pure.

Translated by AJIT KHULLAR

RAJEEV SAXENA

Investigation

On the empty trunks and kitchen cans
scattered near the smashed door and windows
they fail
to identify the fingerprints
of the robber
who gate-crashed and left pompously
with his head held high
making the road royal with his footprints.

The custodians of justice interrogate
only me
and my terror-stricken neighbour.
And cow down everyone.
I feel as if
I am myself guilty of the crime.

During this on-the-spot investigation and search
some wise men smell a nakedness
only to find shameless menstruated rags
of a wage-earner and
an emptiness which is devoid of all power

to assert any tongue is handcuffed
on charge of being blatantly obscene.

Now they have made all the investigations
over to the sleuths and all sympathetic fellows
will follow it closely.

And the scene will come to an end
on the thresholds of ruling houses
where wagging sleuths will end their search.

The robbed—I—
can only cry
after handing over the charge
of discovering the reality to the sleuths.

Translated by AJIT KHULLAR

SARVESHWAR DAYAL SAXENA

The Refugees

Under black tornadoes and heavy rains
lying in these puny tents
we have much to think back to :
that how quickly...and how much
the world can shrink,
that how helpless God can appear
and that Man....
Don't talk of him.

Better if you took me
to some man-eater's lair
at least it wouldn't attack
with a full belly.

Let me remember...
the salt I got today as ration...
so kind of you... .
Was it not gritty ?

You picked us up from the dirt, and so
we too had to pick it off the ground
into battered plates.

Pick gravel out of broken rice.
 I would have sung for you
 tapping the beat on my belly
 if only I could.
 No, we are not ungrateful.

Let me remember...
 how many times I held out my hand...
 the innocent hand...
 always ready to do any job
 (to dig a canal, to dig a grave)....
 Held it out in front of you and felt
 I was worse than the corpses
 that had floated down with us in the river.
 No, I am not ungrateful, still alive.

I do not know whose coin you gave me.
 It feels like a dead bird's wing in my sweating fist.

Let me remember...
 Before I fled
 did I set my pet birds free
 from their cages ?
 Did a single tree escape the fire
 where they could roost ?
 Did the fire die out before it reached
 my family shrine
 where I had kept
 my family-tree ?
 The wind is fierce and my son's wife
 is not yet back.

There was with her
 even at dusk, a face exactly like the ones
 I had seen in that pack of soldiers
 who had left my daughter
 half dead.

No, I am not grateful
 but sometimes
 the hand that holds the gun
 and the hand of aid
 begin to look alike.

Do not think I am worried
 about my daughter-in-law.
 My son is already dead
 and my daughter is in your hospital.
 When the brutes grabbed her
 she was untying our calf, starving for
 many days,
 so it could go through the bamboo patch
 and graze in the marsh.

Let me remember...
 How long was it before the bamboos broke into flames ?
 Before machine-guns began to crackle
 in the swaying grass ?

The wind is fierce
 and the raindrops are getting bigger.
 Why do you stare at me ?

Listen ! if one sees too many dead faces
 even the living ones appear dead.
 And seeing eyes seem more dreadful
 than those petrified.
 Watching the breast rise and fall
 as one breathes
 one suddenly thinks of sharp knives.

But what is that to you ?
 You are in a land where

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you can so easily give us sympathy
 without losing anything
 can take pity
 shower blessings
 and not miss a thing.
 So easy for you to be generous
 as difficult for me to die.
 No, it is not my intention
 to remind you of those, who died
 of hunger, disease, and pain
 lying outside the tents.
 Waiting to have their names entered
 in the register of refugees.
 I heard at one and the same moment
 the whistle of the relief train
 the air raid siren
 and the shriek of the dying man's kin.

Let me remember...
 Did someone else tell me that ?
 And what was he doing ?
 Holding a naked, starving child in his arm
 or, leaving it in the mud, his eyes shut
 trying to recall words he had forgotten ?
 How easy it is to say
 that I have none, that there is someone !
 Memory is a beaten path on which a foot—cut off—
 goes dripping blood.
 I love my body and those limbs haunt me
 which were cut off and left behind.
 Can you leave behind and forget
 a piece cut off from your body ?
 But you have no need to think of that.
 You have no need to think of anything.
 Man's corpse is sometimes waved like a flag
 at another time held up like a sign

carried through the streets
 tucked away sometimes for quiet worship
 still other times nailed to trees and arches
 to use for weaving dreams.
 The world knows the uses of a corpse.

Let me remember...
 When did I think of this phrase
 then, when I feared death;
 or now, when I fear to live ?

There are innumerable people
 who innocently speak a language
 and get punished.
 Who live an innocent life
 and are called refugees.
 But leave it
 for there is much else for us to remember
 lying in these puny tents
 under raging gales and thundering showers.
 ...a field...a mango grove...a river...a boat...
 some fish...some children...some elders...some
 scriptures...
 ...a song...a melody...a dream...a house...some trust...
 some hopes...some friends...some foes. . .
 Yes, there is so much to remember.
 But, each time it seems I'm opening a coffin
 in a gloomy, shadowy world, wandering like a ghost.
 Deprived of one's face one becomes
 a source for others to gain a face.
 But better it would be to drown out lights
 that we may not see each other's face.

Translated by C.M.N. and B.M.

PARTAP SEHGAL

No Sooner...

No sooner was I born,
on my shoulders
was foisted
the wizened one—
overgrown beard,
stooping head,
threadbare.

Now
the old one—
fitting himself with my own person
desires to give voice through my mouth—

This is his strategy
against the call of my conscience.

Of course, I shall not be
an accomplice in his game.

Translated by R.L. SHARMA

VINOD SHARMA

Abattoir

In the dead of the night
twin apparitions materialize :

One—dyed in an ink
deeper even than the night's.
The other, a grotesque-breasted ogress
of a mountainous height.

Hence, an ogre shouts unfamiliar gibberish
down the pits of my sensitive ears.

And the long-taloned hands sprouting
on monstrous shoulders
enskirt the naked walls of the open-city
with bills and notices.

Dawn, and the countless deaf-mute eye
the crimson dripping off statements served on hot bricks.

High-noon, and the long-lines of the pious blind
pay heed to envenomed pronouncements.

My eyes agape return towards
the scarifying ogress of the long night—

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her thousand cavernous mouths
belching repeating volleys of sulphuric phrases.

Dusk, and the senses forsaken crowds
congregate on the Gandhi-maidans
to intake the honeyed syllables
of those clad in immaculate white.

Listening, myriad mysteries are unveiled
but soon the night's Black-at-attention
rises like a forbidding wall
as though a stink of deep conspiracy
he had smelt.

Up crawls fear on the steps of my spine.
Oh know, hooded cannibals are at large in my city;
on auspicious days whole settlements
are placed on the privileged block

Now I've the hang even of it : this Dame—
blessed with countless, crafted faces,
long arms,
is a great spell-binding being.

She sweetly pronouncing this, announcing that,
has a simple folk rendered, into charming puppets.

Am wondering how warn
this abattoir-ward sliding,
much-believing, native town.

Translated by KESHAV MALIK

SHYAM SINGH SHASHI

Search for the New Man

The emotional dust-storm dizzily rising
I spin in un-supporting space.

A second one of the emotions,
rising from the incandescent heart
of mother Earth, I'm scalded
as if in the salamandrine fires of the deep sea.

But once again, a third storm,
and I'm catapulted towards the arms of some
Urvashi by dogs and vultures torn.

The dust-storm rises, compelling me to toll
the bell of cosmic annihilation
and lay a hollowed out
society on its pier.

In search
of the new man
I must now begin to wander.

Translated by MANOHAR BANDOPADHYAY

PRAYAG SHUKLA

Spring

How, not a little is lost un-knowing—
suddenly
spring holds a mirror
and the heart waver's
in the air.

Letters,
capturing sound and colour
remain unwritten
and a fragrance, halves
the full circle of an existence.

The sky expands
and shadows of sorrow
elude grasp—
the heart longs to forget the fact
of eternal imperfection
and weighs everything,
to remember something.

A bright sunlight
gets tangled with objects

and for endless time
the feeling
of *not being* persists.

Things acceptable to spring
vanish from sight
to make re-living possible.
That random craving unending,
for creation
remaining intact.

Translated by KAILASH VAJPEYI

KEDAR NATH SINGH

It Does Not Matter

Every time I return and check in—
my house gets a surprise and says : 'Hail'
O Lord God !
Isn't it a miracle
that wherever I go
I come back here all the time.
On the road they do not demand
your identity card
and in the mirror you do not need a proof
and what a big facility it is
that whether we are all at home
or in a tram
all curiosities
are set at rest
with just a railway timetable.

The sky on every bent
folds me up a little
and then leaves me alone,
to me only;
to take another step or just sit down.
And this is the place

where once you have arrived
 the shrieks of stones can already be heard.
 But the truth in fact is
 that it does not make a difference
 here or anywhere.

Where you once wrote 'Love'
 you now write 'Road'
 but it does not make a difference.

The catch-word of my age is
 'It does not make a difference'.
 It often seems
 as if the faces of the friends sitting beside you
 and the terminal points of the
 indistinct African rivers
 have become indistinguishable
 And what I want to give words to
 is not on my tongue
 but is sticking somewhere between my teeth.

I might as well start my argument
 but things are passing through such a phase
 that calling the table, opposite you
 'Table' is like lifting it from there
 and placing it among unnamed criminals.
 And this is the point
 at which every bloody vein
 gets severed from the body
 and the time
 when a small nail in my shoe
 starts pinching the stars.

Translated by APU VAJPEYI

SHAMSHER BAHADUR SINGH

A Man Elbow-shoving Two Mountains

A man elbow-shoving two mountains
from east to west
with measuring steps
advancing.

How tall are the
overgrown grasses
touching the stars
almost.
From their midst
his knees are
picking up the way ahead.
Merging his gloam with the light of dawn.

Why then
does the float of clouds
vex him so ?

Translated by AJIT KHULLAR

Facts Will Speak

Facts will speak
not we :
facts reveal
the mystery.

Look
at the countenance of truth
in the eyes of falsehood
look !

The face of truth
is the graph-line of time ;
for fearless people
only truth is bliss,
is bliss.

The demon of destitution
terrible age
cruel predicament
bankrupt mind
the family of workers !
'What tint is truth ?'
With one voice question.

One...people's
who is one !
Banners waving aloft are
numberless.

The demon of destitution
cruel predicament
bankrupt mind
the family of workers !

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A people's only boon is
its voice united
and one.
Else the freedom
ends.

Translated by AJIT KHULLAR

KAILASH VAJPEYI

Ghoul Culture

How much better it is now
all are liars.

How much better it is now
all hate.

Through the link of indifference
cross each other's path
and unacquainted
part.

How much better
all distrust...deceive
and fall out of a well into an abyss.

No one laughs.
No one weeps.
How much better
now everyone stings.
How much better
all, over money haggle
and all like hungry dogs wrangle.

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How much better
everyone grows thorns.
In anger the same world all
chant in a sing song.

How much better
all commit adultery.
How much better
all are scared
of man's humanity.

Although nothing else
has civilization done ;
It has at least made
almost everyone...
inhuman.

Translated by the POET

Deliberation

No ! You will not cry.

No country is worth living in.
No time convenient to die.

Why should everybody be happy ?
Why shouldn't there be bombs ?
Why should there be a limit to misfortune ?
Why can't gloom be versatile ?

Look ! the desert is expanding
misanthropists are being praised.

Genius is bogged
 males are sleeping with males.
 A woman from the East
 is eating her child...alive ;
 In Canada
 an eleven year old grew old
 and died.
 The body is just a change.

Change ?
 You thought you could change ?
 Save your breath !
 Siddhartha, Christ
 even Gandhi had the same illusion.
 And each one died a dog's death.

A blind man pushing
 millions of blind men
 into a black hole...history
 that's what it is called.
 And the pusher and the pushed
 till dissolved...midway
 never realized
 they were wrong.

Still you think you can embrace the void,
 heal the wounds of the wind,
 make a mark on the sands of time,
 repeat the legend of Midas.

Well, tragedy is rather off-beat,
 plot...surrealistically contrived.
 Slush has taken over the sea,
 fever has become the norm.
 The face of night has a celestial glow
 torture...depersonalized.

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A villain stabs the anti-hero
 and carries the cross,
 asking spectators
 if they need an oxygen-mask.
 And why not.
 After all it's a perennial dream
 where green is green
 till you have seen
 the image of horror.

Look into the mirror !
 A whole civilization screams and sobs.
 Only you will not yell.
 Try and forget
 the word...I.

There are many versions of hell.

Translated by the POET

Flesh-tree

Living among these greedy lechers
 who munch coins
 and like leech
 cling to the lions ;
 I often wonder
 why God grew these
 for no good reason at all
flesh-trees.

Translated by the POET

BALDEV VANSHI

Summon

Trees—on empty roads—tremble
at the fleeing rains,
eyes glisten like conjunctivitis,
light is shut up in deep darkness.

Wet winds hold
my arms softly,
whisper :

Come, fly,
there is none
hereabouts.

Translated by MANOHAR BANDOPADHYAY

SHRIKANT VERMA

A Day

A tidy sheet of white
this neat day
mounts glinting.
Somewhere an invisible machine printing.
Buildings, houses, men.
And coming from the lanes
a dog
tail a-sway.
A typewriter on our earth prints
Calcuttadelhibombay.

Suddenly printed somewhere
a tree, head sunk :
a meditational resolve
'I shall not dissolve
in ink...in ink'.

Suddenly etched, a woman mutters
in prayer,
somewhere on the page :
'Arrest this age...my age...
O God...'

At the bus-stop
 a tea shop,
 grumbling in undertone...
 'That sonuabitch
 the wrestler sits on the only broken bench...'
 And so on and so on.

Suddenly printed, on the tank
 the fisherman's net
 sank
 Down the sun from the broad's balcony
 and now goes the pimp....

Tired
 the irritable old clerk heaves
 with hatred
 for the printed city and so
 leaves....

Translated by MRINAL PANDEY

Khyber

'Every one has a place on earth'
 the voices say and become a part.
 Writing year after year my frenzy, I found
 I could express myself
 in no other language.
 The lust for fame and the desire
 to do something uncommon,
 have brought me to a land
 where only the void survives,

(Did the soldiers really cross the Jhelum to crush a
people's dream ?)

Celebrations in the city
designed by rogues
liberated from good and evil,
action and non-action.

Any day is good for change—
the difference is little.
Poems and publicity have a common script.

Tuppence age, asks me
to live in totality.
Enough ! enough !
(I see Alexander's footprints
so near, so far).
Stop, if you can, the world—
the unhappy tide
that wanted to pass through the streets of Paris.
Stop the tumult in Sialdah and Howrah
or face it in countless offices of death.
In search of Geometry
the Greeks shall come again.
Women wearing space-age costumes
wait for soldiers.

I, opposed to none, am opposed to everyone.
To hell with logistics.
You come to conquer a crumbling city—
Burdwan, threepenny Burdwan.

You tried every method—
only your desires remain.
You try another method
only terror shall reign.

Babur returns to Samarkund,
remembers 'Allah' and falls,
Alas !
And you enter through Khyber
or depart through Khyber
what difference does it make.

Translated by the POET and ELIOT ANDERSON

GANGA PRASAD VIMAL

Dream

Ever seen snow fall ?—
without fuss
whole fields are lost
from sight,
and whiteness overcomes
wide forests.

But, detained in dream
I see a wood of deep green;
on the pinnacles of Shrikanth temple
flutter multicoloured banners.

Then the scene changes,
there are sky supporting mountains—
and, on snow, the sun's dazzling linen.

Like paper-landscapes
clinging to house-walls
a ravishing tableaux
is screened on the cliffs of my thoughts.

Slowly the day-dream
goes out, and like an apparition
a mere remembrance lingers on
in memory's dim rooms.

Translated by KESHAV MALIK

SHYAM VIMAL

Corner

Your society
is a picture
nailed on the wall
it's yellowing.

As and when
a wind blows
the worn-out corners flutter.
Then, too, you nail down.

Translated by AJIT KHULLAR

Notes on Poets

BHARAT BHUSHAN AGARWAL (1919-75) is former Assistant Secretary, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi ; has published six volumes of poems, two volumes of verse plays, one novel and a volume of critical essays; well known for his limericks in Hindi, has translated Tagore from the original Bengali into Hindi.

KEDAR NATH AGRAWAL (b. 1911) is recipient of the Soviet Land-Nehru award; has translated *Pablo Neruda* into Hindi; is the author of five collections of poems ; has worked as Government Pleader in Banda, Uttar Pradesh.

HARIVANSH RAI BACHCHAN (b. 1907), former Lecturer in English, has earned his popularity as a poet ; recipient of the Padma Bhushan, Sahitya Vachaspati, Sahitya Akademi and Soviet Land-Nehru awards ; has over sixty published works ; the most outstanding works are : *Madhushala*, *Nisha Nimantran*, *Pranaya Patrika*, *Do Chattanen*, *Chaun-sath Russi Kavltayen* (all poetry) and *Kya Bhulun Kya Yad Karun* , *Needh Pra Nirman* (autobiography).

ASHOK BAJPEYI (b. 1941) is presently Secretary, Education and Culture, M.P. Govt. ; has published *Shahar Abbhi*

Sambhavana Hal (poetry) and *Phillhal* (criticism); has also edited *Poorvagraha* (bi-monthly); *Samvet* (anthology of new writings in Hindi); *Pahchan* (series of individual works, mainly poetry, by young writers).

DHARAMVIR BHARATI (b. 1926) is poet, playwright, novelist, critics and editor; author of *Kanupriya* (poetry); *Suraj ka Satvan Ghoda* (novel), *Band Gall ka Akhiri Makan* (short stories); *Pashyanti* (essay); *Manavmulya aur Sahitya* (criticism); he is well known for *Andha Yug* (verse-play); his works have been translated into several Indian languages and in English, Bulgarian, Czech, German and Russian; recipient of the Padma Shri, Mr Bharati is presently Editor of *Dharmayug*.

JAGDISH CHATURVEDI (b. 1933) is Assistant Director, Central Hindi Directorate, Ministry of Education and Culture, New Delhi; has a number of publications to his credit; these include *Itihas Hanta*, *Suryaputra*, *Dubte Itihas ka Gavah* (all poetry); *Nihang* (short stories); *Pill Dopahar* (plays); and *Dastarvej* (criticism).

SNEHMAYI CHAUDHARI teaches Hindi in Janaki Devi College, University of Delhi; and has published one volume of poems.

CHANDRAKANT DEOTALE (b. 1936) is Assistant Professor of Hindi, Govt. College, Ratlam, M.P.; his published works include: *Haddiyon men Chhlpa Jyar*, *Diwaron Par Khoon se* (both poetry); and *Dusae Dusare Akash* (travelogue, ed).

DHOOMIL (SUDAMA PRASAD) has published one volume of poems ; worked in ITI Varanasi ; died of brain tumour at an early age of thirty-two.

RAMDHARI SINGH DINKAR (1908-74) has published a number of volumes on essays, critical works, travelogues and a monumental work on culture ; his poetry *Renuka* (1935) made a name for him; his other important collections of poems are *Samdheni*, *Neelkusum*, *Urvashi* and several others ; was honoured with the Sahitya Akademi award and the Jnanpith award.

LEELADHAR JAGOORI (b. 1944) has five books of poems to his credit e.g.. *Shankha Mukhi Shikhran par*, *Natak Jari hai*, *Is Yatra men*, *Raat Ab bhi Maujud hai* and *Bachl hul Prithvi par*.

KAMLESH (b. 1938) is formerly Editor of *Jan*, *Samvaya*, *Pratipaksha* (weeklies) ; has published *Jaratkaru* (poetry) ; some of his poems have been translated into Marathi, English, Bulgarian and Russian.

KEDARNATH KOMAL (b. 1931) has written *Chaurahae Par*, *Kohre Se Nikalte hue*, *Suraj ke Aas Pas*, *Suraj ke Bacche* (all poetry); has been translated into several Indian languages and English ; works in the University Grants Commission, New Delhi.

AJIT KUMAR (b. 1933) teaches Hindi literature in Kirori Mal College, Delhi University ; has published about a dozen books e.g., *Anklt Hone Do*, *Yeh Phool Nahin*, *Kavita ka*

Jeevit Sansar, Door Ban Mein, Prem Kavtayan, Akele Kanth Ki Pukar etc.; has edited a number of anthologies also.

PRABHAKAR MACHWE (b. 1917) is Director, Bharatiya Bhasha Parishad, Calcutta; his publications include *Jagjivanram : Vyakti ani Vichar* (biog); *Tar Saptak* (poetry with six other poets), *Joe* (novel); *From Self to Self* (autobiography) and *Four Decades of Indian Literature* (criticism).

GIRIJA KUMAR MATHUR (b. 1919) had been associated with the All India Radio; has received an award from the Govt. of Czechoslovakia for a part of his verse-play *Prithvikalpa*; his other publications include: *Manjir, Nash aur Nirman, Dhupe ke Dhan, Shila Pankh Chamkile, Chhaya Mat Chhuna, Man, Tar Saptak etc.*

BHAWANI PRASAD MISHRA (1913—85) was Deputy Chief Editor of *Sampurna Gandhi Vangmay* (collected works of Mahatma Gandhi); lately Editor of *Gandhi Marg* and in Publication Section, Gandhi Shanti Pratisthan, Delhi and *Gagananchal*—a quarterly of Indian Council for Cultural Relations, Delhi; author of *Gandhi Panchshati, Buni Huyi Rassi, Khushbu ke Shilalekh, Andheri Kavtayan, Chakit hai Dukh, Geet Farosh*; has won the M.P. Govt. award, Ghalib award, Delhi Sahitya Kala Parishad award, and the Sahitya Akademi award.

SOUMITRA MOHAN (b. 1938) is presently Assistant Editor of Lalit Kala Akademi; his publications include: *Chaku se Khelte hue, Nishedh, Lukman Ali Tatha Anya Kavtayan* (all poetry); *Banabhatta* (criticism, translated from English of K. Krishnamoorthy work); *Door ke Padosi* (current

affairs, translated from English of Kuldip Nayar's *Distant Neighbours*).

GAJANAN MADHAV MUKTIBODH (1917—64) is author of two volumes of poems, and a book of critical essays; started Progressive Writers Association in central India; edited *Hans* magazine in Varanasi; was teaching Hindi literature at the Digvijay College, Rajnandgaon (Madhya Pradesh).

VISHNU NAGAR (b. 1950), journalist by profession, is associated with *Navbharat Times*, New Delhi; has published several volumes of verse, e.g. *Main Phir Kahata Hun*, *Chiriya*, *Talab men Dubi Chheh Larkian*.

KUNWAR NARAIN (b. 1927) has published three volumes of poems and a collection of short stories; his long poem *Atmajayee* received the Hindustan Akademi award in 1971; one of the editors of the avant garde magazine *Yugchetna*—an influential periodical of the late fifties.

SHYAM PARMAR (b. 1924) worked with the Indian Institute of Mass Communication, New Delhi; has published many books including a volume of poems.

DIVIK RAMESH (b. 1946) is Lecturer in Hindi, Motilal Nehru College, University of Delhi; his collections of poems include *Raaste ke Beech*, *Khulee Aankhon Mein Aakash*, *Zokar Mujhe Banado Jee* in Hindi and *Feather* in English; his poems have also been included in a number of books.

RAGHUVIR SAHAY (b. 1929) is journalist by profession; has served as Special Correspondent of AIR and *Navbharat Times* and was Assistant Editor of *Pratik* and Editor of *Dinaman*—weekly; is presently Assistant Editor of *Navbharat Times*; his publications include *Dusra Saptak*, *Atmahatya ke Viruddha*, *Hanso Hanso Jaldi Hanso* (all poetry), *Seedlon par Dhoop men* (misc.); *Rasta Idhar Se Hal* (short stories); etc. *Dilli Mera Pardes* (essays).

VIJAY DEV NARAIN SAHI (b. 1924) has published a volume of poems, besides contributing to literary journals; was also Editor of *Nai Kavita*—a magazine; teaches English literature in the University of Allahabad.

RAJEEV SAXENA (b. 1923) has published *Prabhat Sangeet*, *Atma-Nirvasan Aur Anya Kavitaen*, *Kavita Kavltantar* (poems); *Utara Nasha* (one-act play); *Andhere ke Saye* (novel); *Pani Putry Soma* (on the life of the Rigvedic period); has also rendered many Marxist classics into Hindi; active participant of the Communist Party and working class movement in the forties; had been jailed several times; winner of the Soviet Land-Nehru award.

SARVESHWAR DAYAL SAXENA (b. 1927) is Editor of *Parag*—a monthly; has received the NCERT award for Juvenile Poetry, Authors' Guild award, M.P. Govt. Tulsi Puraskar, Delhi Sahitya Kala Parishad; has written *Kuano Nadi*, *Jangal ka Dard*, *Khuntlyon par Tange Log* (all poetry); *Do Laghu Upanyas* (novel); *Andhere par Andhera* (short stories); and *Bakri* (play).

PARTAP SEHGAL (b. 1945) is poet, playwright and critic; has published *Swal Ab Bhl Maujood Hai* (poetry); *Rang Basanti*, *Apni Apni Bhumi*, *Andhere Mein*, *Saat Chhote Natak* (plays) etc. *Rang Basanti* has been awarded as best script in 1982 by Delhi Sahitya Kala Parishad; teaches Hindi in Zakir Hussain College (Evening), Delhi University.

VINOD SHARMA (b. 1944) is Civil Engineer by profession; has written *Kavita Ek Khidki hai* (poetry); has received the Peio Tavaror Medal of National Museum of Bulgarian Literature for translating Bulgarian poetry into Hindi *Janmabhumi aur Anya Kavitaen*.

SHYAM SINGH SHASHI (b. 1935) is at present Director, Publications Division, New Delhi; writes both in Hindi and English; is the author of *Lal Savera*, *Lahoo Ke Phool*, *Shilnagar men* (all poetry, last received U.P. Govt. award); *Banarasi Bachche Kitne Sachche* (jur); *Night-life of Indian Tribes*, and *Nomads of the Himalayas* (humanities)

PRAYAG SHUKLA (b. 1940) is presently with *Naybharat Times*, New Delhi; his publications include *Kavita Sambhav*, *Aye Badal*, *Jungle men Bola hai Mor* (all poetry); *Sarasvatī Bala Git* (nursery rhymes); *Akali Akritiyan* and *Iske Baad* (short stories).

KEDARNATH SINGH (b. 1934) is Associate Professor, Centre of Indian Languages, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi; his publications include *Abhi*, *Bilkul Abhi*; *Zamin Pak rahi hai* (both poetry); *Kalpana aur Chhayavad*, *Hindi Kavita men Bimbavidhan Ka Vikas* (both criticism).

SHAMSHER BAHADUR SINGH (b. 1911) has published *Kuchh Kavitaen*; *Kuchh aur Kavitaen*, *Shamsher Bahadur Singh ki Kavitaen*, and *Chuka bhi hun nahin Main* (all poetry); *Plot ka Morcha* (sketches stories); *Doab* (essays); is also one of the poets of *Dusra Saptak*; has won the Sahitya Akademi award and M.P. Sahitya Parishad's Tulsi award, his poems have been translated into several Indian languages and in Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, English, German, Japanese, Polish and Swedish.

KAILASH VAJPEYI (b. 1934) teaches in Motilal Nehru College, Delhi University; had also been a Visiting Professor in Hindi and Indian Culture in El Colegio de Mexico; has published *Sankrant*, *Dehant se Hatkar*, *Teesra Andhera* (poems); and *Adhunik Hindi Kavita men Shilp* (criticism).

BALDEV VANSHI (b. 1938) is teacher by profession; has published *Darshak Dirgha se*, *Upnagar men Vapasi*, *Andhere ke Bavajood*, *Kala Itihas* (all poetry), and *Samakalīn Kavita*; *Vichar Kavita* (criticism); recipient of the U.P. Govt. award.

SHRIKANT VERMA (b. 1931) is a poet, journalist and a Member of Parliament; was also a visiting poet in Iowa University and organized the National Forum of Writers of All India Congress Committee; is the author of *Maya Darpan*, *Jalsagarh* (both poetry, latter received the M.P. Govt. award and M.P. Govt. Tulsi Puraskar); *Dusri Bar* (novel); *Jhadi*, *Samvad* (short stories); *Jirah* (essay).

GANGA PRASAD VIMAL (b. 1939) is presently Lecturer in Zakir Hussain College (Evening), Delhi University; has twelve published works to his credit; they include *Vijap*

(poetry) ; *Apne se Alag* ; *Mrichika*, *Mrigantak* (novels) ; *Ateet men Kuch* (short stories) ; *Samakalin Kahani Ka Rachana Vidhan* etc.

SHYAM VIMAL (b. 1931) is postgraduate teacher ; has written two novels, two collections of poems ; has translated from the Sanskrit Kalidasa's *Ritu Samhar* into Hindi ; won the Govt. of India award for *Unhache Tukde* (poems) written in Marathi.

KANNADA POETRY

Editor : S.K. DESAI

Introduction to the First Edition

This anthology represents Kannada poetry written in the post-independence era, say, from 1950 to 70. I have, more or less, confined myself to what is generally called *Navya Kavya*, since that is the most significant and the most dominant trend of poetry that grew and established itself during this period. The choice of the poems is, to a large extent, my own, though, in quite some cases, the availability of already existing translations weighed upon my choice. I confess that sometimes I have been guilty of choosing not the best poems of a poet but the easily translatable ones. An anthology is essentially an appetizer, a 'prologue to the swelling act', and a trailer—all rolled into one. I hope this anthology gives, on the whole, a fairly good, and tasty, sample of modern Kannada poetry, without doing much injustice to the essential qualities of the poets. I am aware that I have left out a number of poets who could be cited as equal or superior to some of those included here, but I couldn't help leaving them out for the simple reason that I was asked to choose not more than fifteen to twenty poets and not more than thirty-five to forty poems. I apologize, therefore, to all those who have been left out, and I would also like to suggest in this context that all those included in this volume are not necessarily good or of abiding value. Some have been, for instance, included for their historical importance, some for their sheer uniqueness,

some for their general popularity, some to indicate a potential trend and so on. Making an anthology is always an unsatisfactory thing, but, however unsatisfactory it may be, it is, an important activity, because it brings together a number of poets on a common platform and helps to highlight some of the major trends. I shall be greatly satisfied and feel rewarded if the non-Kannada readers succeed in getting from this anthology, some concrete idea of modern Kannada poetry and become curious to know more about it.

I have been very lucky in my translators, some of whom, like K. Raghavendra Rao, A.K. Ramanujan, Shankar Mokashi-Punekar, are distinguished 'Indo-Anglian' poets. I am grateful to all of them, particularly to K. Raghavendra Rao, on whose translations a large measure of the success of the anthology depends. I consider myself mainly as a catalyst, willingly or unwillingly, I had to become an active agent sometimes.

I am grateful to the Indian Council for Cultural Relations for entrusting me with this pleasant work of compiling the anthology. My thanks are also due to Shri Gopalakrishna Adiga for his affectionate encouragement, though, I must hasten to say, he has nothing to do with the actual choice of the poems. I have certainly enjoyed myself making this anthology and hope that the reader too finds it enjoyable.

I need not, I think, discuss the socio-cultural background that was responsible for the rise and development of *Navya Kavya* in Kannada, because it has been the same for all Indian literatures : the end of the Gandhian era, the stresses and strains of independence, the travails and tribulations of a new developing country, unhealthy forces thrown out by democracy—communalism, groupism, nepotism, corruption, lust for power, selfishness of the worst kind, consequent breakdown of standards and moral norms, disintegration and disillusionment alongside with an increase in opportunity and prosperity. The increasing alienation of the intellectual and the artist from society. Those who were ignorant of or

insensitive to the new ethos of the country did ask, even in the sixties, questions like, "Isn't *Navya* literature just imitative and borrowed from the West? Does it arise inevitably from the soil, from the cultural conditions obtaining in the region? Isn't the literature of Bendre, Puttappa, Masti, Karant, Kailasam good enough for us? How can the old tradition lose its vitality at the height of its power?" As an answer to these questions I can do nothing better than to quote Gopalakrishna Adiga, the central figure of the new movement, from his preface to *Nadedu Banda Darl*, a book of poems published in 1952 :

The twentieth century Kannada poetry has now entered a new phase. Time has already come for a change in the nature and form of poetry. The atmosphere that we had till the attainment of freedom has radically changed. The enthusiasm, the passion, the idealistic fervour, which had lifted us up during the struggle for freedom, are gone, and now our minds have come down to the earth. Our spirit, a cloud that had climbed up, is now turned into rain, filling all the cracks and valleys. The dirt and muck that had settled down at the bottom has now come up and muddied the glassy water. The spirit of the nation is yearning for a new ideal, a new vision. With such an atmosphere all round, it is but natural that poetry, which is always dependent on life, must necessarily change So the new sensibility that is growing up must find a new tongue, a new idiom to express itself. . . .

The early twentieth century Kannada poetry, inspired by the 19th century Romantic poets of England, like Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats, has achieved its possibilities in that tradition. That tradition has lost its vitality now; it is in its decline. Its limitations have become most obvious. At first, though it hankered after stars, its feet were on the ground; but now it has left the ground and floated up and is lost in the mists of mysticism. Words are taking the place of meaning. Every emotion and every experience is getting over-simplified and thus getting increasingly away from truth. At such a time poetry needs to be injected with the blood of reality. Poetry must again become earthy, smelling of the earth. . . From this point of view, we have to derive inspiration from modern English poets like Eliot and Auden. But our new poetry shall not develop on the lines of those poets. Blind imitation of their poetry might result in some kind of newness, but it won't be poetry. We

should never forget that our new poetry is related to the atmosphere of our country, to the life of our people, and to the strength and limitations of our new language. . . ." (translation mine).

This could be considered the manifesto of the new movement in Kannada poetry, for that matter the new movement in Indian poetry. Generalities apart, it would be more interesting, I think, to trace the rise and development of the new movement in terms of the actuality of Kannada poetry.

When we look at the history of modern Kannada poetry from the vantage point of the seventies, we find that the first new voice in Kannada poetry was that of Pejawar Sadashiv Rao, who under the direct impact of western life in Italy, wrote a poem like "A Festival of Dance". In this poem (included in this volume), we see that the poet goes in for new experiences and decides to lead his life in the light of those experiences and not in that of the old traditional cultural norms. There is a certain passion on his decision, a certain abandonment, a kind of passionate absorption in the present (the past peeping in only to be summarily rejected), which is new. Pejawar died in Italy, a young man on the verge of a brilliant career, and his was an irreparable loss to Kannada poetry.

Meanwhile, there was V.G. Bhat who instinctively reacted against the romantic poetry of the pre-independence era, satirizing the holy concepts of god, ātman, love, idealism, the spirit of sacrifice, patriotism, mysticism, etc. Behind his apparently light-hearted satire, there was a clear-eyed acceptance of actuality and a search for new values. But his poetry could not transcend the satirical level, probably because the old poetic framework to which he clung—though, of course, he satirized that too—did not allow him to go beyond. But his was the first authentic voice of rebellion against the sloppy sentimentalism, airy idealism and unworldly mysticism of the romantic poetry.

If Pejawar and Bhat were modern from the point of view of attitude, from the point of view of technique it was Gokak

who was the real precursor of *Navya Kavya*. (The word *navya* was, by the way, coined by him.) An incurable romantic that he is, his modernism was confined mainly to experimentation in style and technique. Thanks to his contact with the West and to his deep knowledge of English literature, he did see the fact that Kannada poetry needed a new idiom and a new technique and set about fashioning them with a missionary zeal. Historically he is a very significant figure. He gave the younger generation a new idiom which helped them to discover themselves, while he himself, by temperament and commitment, did not live up to it. Again, the big literary influence that he enjoyed in the early fifties paved the way for an easy recognition of *Navya Kavya* in Kannada.

Kannada *Navya Kavya* found its authentic pioneer and leader in Gopalakrishna Adiga, and this was indeed a fortunate phenomenon. Adiga's rebellion against the Romantic tradition was total, because it was against himself, against his youth spent in dreams and idealistic illusions. As a young man he was one of the important romantic poets, though it is possible to discover even in his early poetry a kind of genuineness and struggle for individuality, a certain amount of iron in his soul, that helped him to outgrow his former romantic self. Once he broke with the past, he went ahead with a kind of iconoclastic fury and creative passion developing from poem to poem, exploring and conquering new areas of experience with a new idiom which he has never ceased experimenting with. In Adiga a new sensibility was married to a new idiom, both of which admitted complexity and inclusiveness of experience. In his passionate search for meaning and values and in his passionate discoveries, he has a kind of romantic fervour (probably the legacy of his romantic past) which the later modern poetry in Kannada lacks. There are three poems of his in this anthology, two of which deal with a passionate search for identity in a society which is hostile to it (both are essentially satirical), and the third, *Earth Song*, is a philosophic poem about the essential alienation of man. Philosophic

depth, high emotional pressure, complexity of experience—all held together in a poetic tension, which has at its command almost all the resources of language: these have given him the central position in modern poetry. He now appears to be groping towards some kind of religious approach to life, and we have to wait and see what his further phase would be like. Adiga has had tremendous influence on the younger generation of poets, but this influence has always been liberating and creative. He has helped them, by his example, to discover their own individuality and fashion their own idiom. Being a born rebel, he encourages rebellion even against himself.

Following Adiga, some of the younger poets who were working efficiently in the older tradition tried to adapt themselves to new wave, which in its turn helped them to achieve greater introspection and a greater acceptance of the reality of life and self. The new idiom helped them to bridge the gap between the ideal world and the real world. The poets who developed in a new way, without losing contact with the older romantic tradition, include amongst others eminent poets like K.S. Narasimha Swamy, Ramachandra Sharma, Chennaveer Kanavi, G.S. Shivarudrappa and Shanker Mokashi-Punekar. Some of them are very active plying their boats between the two banks. Ramachandra Sharma, who wrote very colourful romantico-modern poetry of sex, has in recent years developed on the lines of the new poets of England. His poetry is now direct, simple, honest and exploratory. Gangadhar Chittal developed on his own, trying to keep himself away from both the traditions. He writes in his own idiom a contemplative kind of poetry dealing with the basic concerns of man like love, sex, fulfilment, time and death. Though his sensibility is modern in its constant search for human constraints, his approach is 'classical', in the sense that he works always on the level of abstractions. He would have gained in significance if his poetry had admitted within it more of the concreteness and complexity of modern experience.

Among the many new poets of, what might be called for the sake of convenience, the post-Adiga phase of modern poetry, Chandrasekhar Kambar, P. Lankesh, Chandrasekhar Patil and Tirumalesh are perhaps the most noteworthy. Each has his own individual point of view and a strikingly unique idiom. Kambar has developed a virile, sensuous style imbued with all the strength and colour of folk idiom, and he has the true 'negative capability' of a potentially great poet, which is trying to assimilate and unify a number of strands—the rural and the urban, the mythical and the realistic, the local and the universal. At the moment Kambar is expressing himself in terms of poetic and symbolical drama. P. Lankesh, who is essentially a dramatist and a short story writer, has brought to poetry a completely unsentimental, but deeply emotional, often angry, attitude. He is one of our angry writers bent upon exposing the phoniness of modern society in an idiom which is sharp, direct and colloquial to the point of being slangy. If Lankesh believes in hitting directly without flinching, Chandrasekhar Patil believes in the subtle power of irony. Patil is a master of irony which he directs at everything, particularly at things considered so far as great or sacred or valuable. No wonder he has now started writing poetry, as he himself says, in the form of 'absurd' plays. Tirumalesh is the most promising of the younger poets, a poet with a distinct sensibility and an individual idiom. His concerns are deeper than those of most of his contemporaries, and hence one can say that he, like Kambar, will go very far in the days to come. Sumatindra Nadig represents the groping 'honest', exploratory kind of poetry which is being written by most of the younger writers who have not been included here for want of space. Nisar Ahmed, like the early Ramachandra Sharma, is a fine artist, a word and image juggler, wielding the new rhetoric with great effect and dazzling success. In Siddhalinga Pattana-shetti we have an imagist who wrings out brilliant images out of the violence of his emotions. Chennaiah represents the youthful writers who are obsessed with the explorations of

the physical self, the self of the senses ; U.R. Ananthamurthy, the author of *Sanskara*, gives a new dimension to this trend, by emphasizing the role of matter, flesh, earth, and *shudratwa* on revitalizing our culture and psyche. And B.R. Laxmanrao indicates a certain trend in post-Adiga poetry—an objective, ironic, low-pressured kind of poetry.

A new sophistication has entered modern Kannada poetry with A.K. Ramanujan's experimentations with the possibilities of language and structure. In his poems, which are highly sensitive constructs, one comes across a kind of lucidity and transparency which was never there in Kannada poetry, except probably in the Vachanas of Basaveshwara. He has the unique capacity to see things in an oddly new way, without sentimentality, without emotion even, with his cool, but tenuous, intellect almost always playing with the objects of his experience in a manner which is poetic because it is unique. There are many young writers now who are greatly influenced by Ramanujan in matters of language and structure. A trained linguist that he is, Ramanujan has made us self-conscious about words, their sound and structure, along with the form and structure of a poem.

I wish I were able to include young poets like Chandrakant Kusnur, Aravind Nadkarni, Shrikrishna Alanahalli, Buddanna Hingmire, Arya, Subray Chokkadi, Subray Deshpande and many others who have written a strikingly fresh kind of poetry. What is common to most of these post-Adiga poets is that they are all intent upon exploring their individual experience in a direct, honest, critical, unsentimental manner; they all feel alienated to a greater or lesser extent and they have nothing to fall back upon except their vibrant youthful selves. They are curiously indifferent to socio-political situation and also to metaphysical problems (there are, of course, exceptions). They are, most of them, self-absorbed beings, using poetry as an instrument of self-exploration. They are all courageous, unpretentious, and, what is more, quite competent. It is to be seen how

they will develop and who among them will emerge as really significant. The only thing that one can say at the moment is that the future of Kannada poetry in the seventies is not without promise.

S.K. DESAI

M. GOPALAKRISHNA ADIGA

Do Something, Brother

Do something, brother :
something, anything;
You mustn't be idle.
Pull out this plant, nip this little leaf,
crunch that flower.
There's grass, run
your faggots through.
Butterflies, parrots, sparrows—chase
them, hold them, cage them, pluck
their wings and pull their fur and feather.
There in the garden grow, for the wild elephant's feet,
jasmine and the banana's gold.

All over your walls
virility's master-switchboards
itch for your fingers. Close
your eyes and pull twenty down.
Earth, water, the skies, they are all
your geese with golden eggs.
Gouge them : slash them.
'Do, or die', they say.
For your genius' galloping dance

disasters are the test.
 Brother, act, act at once, do something.
 Thought's weights and measures
 are all for the past,
 for the dead's undying ghostly treasures.
 There's the forest, cut it
 clean to the stump, slit it for your buntings.
 You have the axe, the sickle, the saw
 and the knife; go, harvest all the world
 with a flourish of your hand—

But
 winter mists ;
 light foggy walls that line
 the space between your face and mine;
 the road sighs and breaks in two
 under the eyes,
 a couple of mountain-peaks rear their hoods
 and lower upon your head;
 or lightning-winks from sirens
 that sing on every tree :
 do they plunge you
 into anxieties and dilemmas of reason ?
 No, no, this won't do.
 You are a simple man,
 and that's your strength.
 Horse-sense and the blinkers
 are your forte.
 Eat what comes to the hand; crush what you touch;
 cut the hindering vines.
 Mother Earth herself, though tired,
 lies open to the skies; there's still flesh
 upon her bone, marrow for your hunger.
 Come, come, brother, never forget
 that you are a man !

Then there's the Well. Rope
 the wheel and axle, pull all
 the water out. Reach the last dryness
 of the rock; grope, grope with the grappling iron.
 'V for Victory', brother.
 Gain the God's own arrow,
 and aim it straight to the heart
 of God's own embryo-world.
 Do something, anything,
 anything, brothers.
 Idle men
 are burdens on the land.
 Do, brother, do something.
 Keep doing something all the time
 to lighten Mother Earth's loads.
 This is right. This is natural.
 This is the one thing needful.

Translated by A.K. RAMANUJAN

Prayer

Lord, plying the well-known pumps of heraldic praise
 your hirelings bend double; others, gouty wagtails,
 lick the land for crumbs; one snuffs his candle out
 and seeks like an eunuch leech
 the warm Marshes in the cracks of light;
 another sissy gives his back to the time-fed rumps
 and sheathes his dagger deep. Lord, I am not of these.
 Here's one who grins inside
 triumphing that his lifted lantern lit the face of dawn;
 he cannot bend, this fat-faced cock of the walk :
 Lord, cut open this dropsic bulge.

Sleepless waterskins join night to day in his belches
drawing long paean-notes with each : run thy sickles
clean in Thy kindness through this miasmatic crop,
and turn his daily bread into turning blood;
give the poison-vapours natural vents
and give every one outlets into privacy,
lest they vent their gall on paper-virgins.
More than all, teach them the first lesson
in the hygiene of mastication, two and thirty times,
processed and blent in the saliva stream :
even if you do not teach them this, teach them
to learn that they have not learned. Shear the illusion
that onions bring their throats the smell of musk ;
O, whenever words are blown to balloon in the mind
pinpoint O Lord the precision of Thy truth.

Arrest the automation of the dream-sense
as it switches open all the sluices
while inaccessible giant thighs
play fast and loose; do not rouse us to self-abuse
when peris, jostle in a disembodied striptease
in the wind, and in thy infinite mercy
send us frequently reality's women; for the self
to wrestle with and nuzzle in, send real thighs
and taut new skins.
At every retreat from the winds outside, do not send
for your guerrilla packs of extinct selves.
Let the guests come home with their bodies fullfleshed;
save me from the pest of the skinless guest.

See every ship to its haven, let no whale-hips swallow
the vessel, keep them going from harbour to harbour.
Keep the going poised against the coming to the very end.
Still, keep the ancestral flame of the wisdom of desire
burning clear and high, untouched by the English pox.

The taper wavers in the wind. Even electric lamps
 are vulnerable to a blow. Your mountain of vapours
 condenses to a seminal drop and digs into the earth
 in its arrogance and spills itself everywhere.
 For liquefaction's ecstasy even thorn is as grass.
 For a moment's fulfilled desire, days, months, years,
 even aeons of desire evaded, turned wrong side out,
 twisted.

Father, teach us to produce the full nine-month
 carnal marvel.

Teach us not to bend, and to bend ;
 to let the flame dig against the cheek of dawn
 and to stay in patience wavering with the wind.
 Teach the neighing pride of the wild horse
 never to become a hackneyed colt,
 give it the habit of bearing upon its back
 the airy thighs of the immense world.

Forgetful of the little bedchamber upstairs,
 you are the one, the only one with the seminal sap
 rising to burgeon in no common loins, nor
 waking to pour it between compatible legs.
 Awareness such as this, my prince, is an egg
 half-brooded over ; let the Great Hawk
 come bursting through his shell
 churning the winds like a silver-gleaming staff
 while the burdens loosen under your haunches.*

Translated by A.K. RAMANUJAN

* Reference to a mythological story. Vinata (Vinuta) laid two eggs and, growing tired of brooding over them, broke open one of them. Inside was a bright child but the lower part of his body was not fully developed. The gods made him the charioteer of the sun-god and thought that he would have been a rival of the sun-god if he were fully developed. Garuda, the great hawk, came out of the second egg and was made mount of Vishnu, the protector and the support of the universe (A.K.R.).

Earth Song

I

Birth

On the lower treads of the hill stairs—just
 Three tumbles and you're down to the boiling oil
 cauldron of the sea—
 She outstretched and beckoned
 Waving palm fronds ;
 She dandled me
 Rattling nut bunches.
 In the cane-press trundle seated, she exuded gut
 throbbing
 Endless streams
 Fed me the song of the flesh
 Through paddy, wheat, millet winnowed,
 Lulled me in the fragrant hill peak
 Of Ganté, Goraté, Jāji, Mandāra, Malligé,
 Rinsed me in the vibrant damson of bird song.
 In the sky—in the cosmic curvature of cloud—she
 beneath.
 Infused life's flare.

Boyhood

In the gorge, under trees, trees
 The dense fruit of the dhoopa, tender shoot, mean,
 whoop
 Wherever the wand of rain touched her anatomy,
 The whole earth, shoot, spray, branch, plant, grass.
 Through and through the garden Goraté, the intoxicated
 rainbow-bulb light,

The scatter, pell-mell.
 The bee drew near, jingling its ankle bells,
 Danced, kissing, pressing the cup-flower to its lips.
 I sat on the rear verandah and plunged down, down
 further.
 Above, the banging green waves foaming
 As the storm blew and the thunder roared ;
 On the sea bed, I glued my eyes to the heady glow of
 pearls
 And groped till twilight.
 As the lips were being pulled from the toddy pot
 Fancy was feeling for the spring.

Over the hedgerow along the field's border.
 In every inch of grove, within the garden everywhere,
 A place of labour ; agony, anguish, smile.
 The loveliness of the budding spray, shriek, whoop,
 In and out of the labour ward, nurses and doctors—
 At their backs always the four,
 Bamboo is cheap in the cradle shop ;
 An expert in birth-ritual, this priest is peerless in
 funeral-rites.
 Clusters and colonies of spawn rolled in mud
 Crawled on their bellies up the slippery bark
 Flapped their membranes in the deserted streets
 Clapped and danced in gutters.
 Even in the corpse haystack spawned by the searing
 noonday sun
 A little life the leech in moss.
 O, the waters of the Yamuna
 The dance of the head-gem of Kalinga
 On every door the forming eye on every shutter,
 The house an eye, the town an eye, the forest an eye.
 The baby-model camera looked about, swung round
 Hung up its pools and spools in the darkened
 chamber
 And drew the muslin drapes.

At the intersection of the inner and outer
 Amid the roaring garland of waves
 Pearls, golds, diamonds, amethysts, red, yellow,
 Wherever they fall, there and there, the coiling snake-
 embrace.

On the lips, itch of Agastya.
 If you open your eyes, the cacophony of colours
 Green, white, yellow, bursts the ears ;
 The top spins, tail erect, like a cat with a pat of ghee
 on its forehead.

Did she hug me to herself more than a mother ?
 Weave me into her womb again and again ?
 She sang me a lullaby, wringing a bird's neck ;
 She fed me her tit-bits, cutting the shoot necks.
 In the embrace of loving Dhritarashtra
 Was mighty Bhima crushed—
 Nowhere here, the providence of Krishna described.
 My feet have struck roots in her breast
 But I rushed futilely to the stars ;
 Like an eunuch I floundered in the empty bath-pit
 For the endless last trail of cloth.
 Smeared with the sin of Oedipus, I clambered onto a
 tractor,
 Ploughed, harrowed, sowed and grew grains, atom
 bombs ;
 On a harvest of lethal germs I danced.

They call me again and again, the bird of the sky,
 Numerous summons to the wind's court ;
 Prowling round my ears ill-rumours
 Whispered, disturbed me again and again.
 The pother of the sorcerer's spell grown
 Clamorous I ranted
 Merely against myself, crashed against the pillars,
 roof of the cage,
 Screaming, fluttered my wings, pecked and pulled out
 the feathers
 And heaped them in my hopper.

II

The little pony whinnied and frisked ;
 Grass all round, gram, a golden bit, coloured reins ;
 On its head a colourful coquettishness of feathers ;
 Behind, the click lickety-split sporting of "The King's
 Delight"

And the unceasing harvest dance, till the waist sags.
 And then ;

"The body is heavy, the mind is heavy."

"Tattikito Timmanna :

How does the bride draw near her in-laws' house ?"

My brother, your only refuge is the feet of Tirupati
 Timmappa.

"The Goddess of the toddy palm, our mother
 Will show heaven to those who pay,
 to those who pay."

Veda, Shāstra, Purāna, Bhajana, Harikathā-Pujā ;
 The wick twined in front of the broken lamp
 As the oil is giving out.

Even then, this mother will not let me go,
 Will scour the shell of my breast

In the fumes of chillies ;

And in the moment of the journey on the bamboo bier,
 She will not come out ; she is preoccupied with
 another delivery.

III

In Earth Mother's enchanted palace of shellac
 The memory of Hastinapura did not ignite.
 Maya's creation or Sudyodhana's makes no odds—
 There's nothing to fear till the match is struck.
 There I danced, skated on the smooth floor
 From the verandah to the dark inner room.

"Who is there ? Mother ?" I said.
 "Mother ? What nonsense—go, fool !"
 "Chandi, Chamundi, say, what dost thou desire ?"
 "If you are a man, dare you sacrifice me ?"
 Who was it slung her bowels in the gutter ?
 What sly, spuriously pregnant Rambhā ?
 Karna came floating in the Gangā, the son of Rādhā ;
 Except to kill, Kunti will not come.
 All over her body she has childbirth clinics, cemeteries
 This lover of masturbation.
 Tiger, elephant, leopard, cow, goat, donkey,
 Mango, jamun, jack ; these are her natural progeny.
 In the moment of my coming why stirred in this she-devil
 Heterosexuality ?
 They left me in the jungle, blindfold,
 Around me taut barbed wire, salt water to drink,
 ashes to chew,
 Leg-irons for me to dance in.
 I was the guest. To serve me came six friends,
 A burning candle, glaciers of wax all around
 And the wick finally charred and crackling.
 Earth mother is a step-mother ;
 Suruchi to Utthanapada.
 Only through the jungle
 Is the pathway to the sky,
 Is the road to the pole-star :
 The silent chant of the forest sages
 Is the stripped cloth.
 Take back all the finery you gave me,
 This coat, this shirt, these trousers—
 This ramshackle hut is yours, too ;
 Take it.
 Without disburdening, one cannot locate release.
 But for this I can't hold my head erect and walk
 Among equals.
 Can the sword pluck and throw away

The invisible armour, the nectar bowl of the heart,
If it is not naked ?

IV

Vishwamitra said : "Trishanku, get to Heaven."
(The leathery bat, the pendent bark of the tree.)
How difficult, the commotion among golden layers in
the sky cage.
Mire is filthy indeed ; the madness of the fresh placenta
Rotting soon after birth ; the bier of infant life.
It's one thing to be mud, total clod—
But in the clod, the trick of breath
And beyond the trick, the incantation of pure light—
conspiracy !
Lacking footprint's sanction, the path is merely air.
Look here, this is hard ;
When dust with dust, air with air, fire with fire, ether
with ether,
Merge, what is wrong with the residue ?
There is a residue still, an electric wire,
The message from beyond the stars, and transmissions,
The shape emerging from the bowels of the earth.
One to one making atonement making play, making
dance, magic.
—Some say they don't know where the switch is ;
They have forgotten the address of the head office ;
Others insist it must be around here somewhere—
In the darkness, in the blind jammed alley
One must crawl hereafter, groping along the walls ;
The blind man rides the lame ;
How the path unfolds remains to be seen.

Translated by MICHAEL GARMAN AND RAJEEV TARANATH

U. R. ANANTHAMURTHY

The Gipsy Girl

A bunch of burning champaks red
in her hair tied together in a curved knot ;
a fish hidden in her thighs ; serpents erect
on her arms ; in she, the smell, came—
from the backyard where she had stood.

Dark teeth ; torn saree ; but
laughter, laughter, laughter in her eyes
as if packed tight with light.

With a sacred mark on my forehead,
besmeared with *gandha*, dressed in sanctity
on the threshold I stood.
Long ago. It was evening then.

Leaning against the tree, she said, "Sir, get
tattooed—it won't hurt ; let me do it."
There was mischief in her laughter,
her laughter—
harsh and stern.

I stole my mother's saree, gave it her.
She stopped.
I stole my father's money, gave it her.
She stopped.
She laughed—harsh and stern, her eyes
reducing me to a mean, paltry thing.

As if the seed shot roots, and double-born, like a
 brahmin, split in two,
to clutch the soil ploughed by a shudra—
laughter, laughter, laughter in her eyes.
as if it was darkness falling...

Translated by S.K. DESAI

D. R. BENDRE

Despondence

Where the mists and fogs are a-drizzle.
On the horned tip of a mountain, grew a flower.
It yielded no fragrance though many strained to smell it
Its creator alone knows why it was created,

At the long end of its stretched stem,
As if its heart's anguish had broken forth,
Stood a filament or two, petals four or five.
Some grace seemed to gleam even in that shadow of a
flower.

But no Beauty ever. When fragrance there was none,
It attracted the eye but did not captivate the seer.
It invited attention but repelled it the next moment.
Straight stood the flower, erect in its pose.

The very winds were stunned when the flower shunned
their touch.

No trysting bee humming in its frenzied search.
Could ever catch a hint of the flower's pollen or tint.
It was a gloom that mocked life, for it resembled life.

The winds whispered as they sighed around :
 "O the pity of it ! O the unending agony !
 Fate twists the ropes into knots hard to unite,"
 But the flower was unresponsive, inflexible, erect.

Nightly the stars watered it with their tears
 But could not even moisten its filament or two.
 The sun grew blind with blazing and gazing on it.
 The moon waxed and waned in gentle, perpetual moan.

The mutable seasons moved in their grooves of change.
 They changed their colours from grey to green to brown.
 There was alteration even in the mountain's face.
 Caught in its diurnal wear and waste.

But the changeless flower stared wearily into its dun world,
 Stood even as it was, this living flower
 Like a painted thing, like its own picture on a page of
 Nature :
 None could solve the riddle of its existence.

Translated by V. K. GOKAK

Blind Gold

Blind Gold was a-dancing.
 And spurning the prostrate in the dust.
 Blind gold was a-dancing

On its ankles was tinkling silver,
 Of the soap-colour of dead bones,
 The bones of consumptive girl-mothers.

Cowrie shells dangled from its neck,
 Sockets of the anaemic eyes of poor, little children
 Dead and buried as mere bundles of bones.

The torch in its hand was ablaze
 With the fierce hunger in poor men's pates
 Inextinguishably aflame.

Blind gold reeled and danced,
 Drunk with the tears of the helpless,
 And swaggered around as proud words swelled in its mouth.

Its forehead was painted yellow and saffron
 With the dust and sweat that wrinkled the skin
 Of slaving millions, their whole life's earnings.

It set the bells pealing ding-dong in the temple.
 It set the violin and the lute to soft tunes in the palace.
 And it left bags of money ajingle in the market-place.

Dancing madly, dancing waywardly,
 Blind gold fell prostrate on the ground
 When the fun was at its highest.

Shoulder it safely, shoulder blind gold.
 Cremate it, shouldering; it may start dancing again.
 Cremate blind gold that was a-dancing.

Translated by V.K. GOKAK

V. G. BHAT

In Quest of Ātman

For a whole day I searched
But nowhere did I find it—
The soul my elders spoke of
Nowhere, it, did I find.

In the temple stood a bare stone
And dry grass on the altar
Of Vedās and Purānās.

In the eyes of children,
In the ashes of the dead
I searched in vain.
In the cheeks of beauty
There was but vanity.

I plunged to the bottom of tears
And into the flames of fires
But did not find
Even an atom of Ātman,
I searched and searched
But nowhere, it, did I find.

Luckily
No one laughed at my mad
wandering self !

Tired by evening, returning I met
A sage, who learning
My story, laughed,
Laughed in peals and said,
"Go home—
In your own house
you'll find it."
Did I, after all, wander in vain ?

I lay down in my bed
Languishing, yearning
For the Ātman...Hark !
A call ! Who ? I turned and looked.
There was none, not a soul.
Again the call ? I couldn't resist.
I followed and stopped at the huge cupboard.
"Come child", a voice called, and I saw
And opened the book. "Here I am",
said the voice, "Here I am, child, search..."

Eureka ! Eureka !
The Ātman I found
on page number hundred and fifty three
of Kittel's Dictionary.
Hari Om Hara Om, Hari Hara Om Sat.

Translated by S.K. DESAI

The Image

On the back of this wind,
an image must be carved—
all else is preparation for it,
this flesh, this learning,
birth, death and suffering.

This is no soft wax
and the chisel may blunt—
it must be whetted often
against water and dust.

Time slips through—
the chisel splits
and must be cast away—

another birth may have to be taken,
since the image must be carved.

For whom ? Why ? Exactly what image ?
Ask not.

On the back of this wind...

Translated by K. RAGHAVENDRA RAO

H. M. CHANNAIAH

The Lunar Eclipse

that was a lunar eclipse then—the telescope
might have raised its head and turned towards him—
even the moon might be remembering it :
the illicit taste of the sweet embrace,
the frank talk, and the fear that he would come.
look, the earth that has smeared the moon's face with ink
must have laughed.

when it struck one, the dog barked at the moon,
the cat overturned a vessel, "it's late, let me go, he
might come," you said
and the impish stars winked knowingly at the tips of
your breasts
and the moon laughed heartily in the necklace of
black beads ;
the wind slipped stealthily.
emerging from the pure waters of Cauveri, he,
shivering in wet clothes, in vibrant voice,
chanted the ritual words which would propel him
to heaven,
slipped down the curved hips of the hills,
and the moon liberated from Rahu smiled

in the crystal-clear water at the fringe of the lake.
he chanted the ritual words—
in Kailash, the ascetic Shiva blessed him.

again turning into a child, burying the face in soft
breasts,

I played on the slopes beneath,
you said I was the one you had loved with all heart,
and so I, too, said.

It struck six, the bells in the temple rang,
celebrating the release from the evil of the eclipse.
the sun rose separating the red fusion of the thighs of
earth and sky,
the tightness of the link between our bodies and souls,
relaxed.

Translated by K. RAGHAVENDRA RAO

GANGADHAR CHITTAL

O Boy, With a Head Full of Dreams

O boy, with a head full of dreams,
O thief, snatching at secret glances,
You are strutting with rutting pride,
Eager to climb life's lovely hill.

The voice is gruff ; the thighs are taut :
A power like a bull rushes through all the limbs
Trumpeting like an army the news of manhood,
Shaking the mind, brandishing, rousing,
Swelling the neck, shouting "Alalakeeha."¹

Your baby world of yesterday,
Which you lapped like milk, is stirred today :
It rushes in another direction, towards
Another stance, ripples, cascades, rolls
Into another stream, flowing into doubleness.
The *yoni*²-mouth is revealed and the inner waters
Are churned. The odour of the female
Fills the mouth. You are face to face with Kāma !
Oh, *you* are *yoni*-struck !
You rise as though to conquer, as though drunk
With the fragrance, strange beyond the earth,

You walk with the wind, stretching your nostrils,
Sniffing the offerings, seeking bonds with the universe.

Suddenly for your sake somewhere blossoms
A flower of the thighs, warm and waiting ;
She cannot see the ground and you cannot see the
country :

The goal is magnetic, kissing your mettle ;
The soul is mounted on the string of the bow.
The sun has climbed and stood above your head.
It's only a season. But what wealth it brings :
The ranges of mountain peaks go mad,
Sprout, quicken with colours and fructify.
Now is the rushing to the garden
Hunting and coupling, joining
In secret, feeding the bodies ;
After the breaking of the shell, the coming
Of a new being--miracle !

Translated by S. K. DESAI

1. A proud, valorous character in the Kannada ballet-cum-opera, the Yakshagana, makes his entry on the stage with this ejaculation.
2. The female sex organ. The original word is retained because of its mystic and transcendental associations.

After Twelve Years

After twelve years I set out for my village
Carrying bunches of many sweet memories.
Going up the village hill and down I felt—
this morning sun, and there the sea spreading
white foam on the sands ; and on the edge,

as far as the eye could see, the casuarina trees in rows, saying 'so-o-o' to the wind, this bare hill, these shrubs on the slope in flocks like the grazing sheep, this valley, these rocks—these are what they were twelve years ago. Only to the grown-up eye the world that had spread far and wide looks a bit small—that's all. Everywhere under the reflected shadow of recognition all the joys of old come back to mind.

I went further, and rushed with eagerness
to our childhood garden.
But everywhere lay the wrinkled shadow
of twelve years.

The *ashwatha* on the stone platform,
the shop at the front, the fields, the road,
the shaded lane ahead, the street
that takes a turn to the house and goes beyond—
everything whimpered, as though,
a tale of sorrow of days gone by.
I felt as if I'd come in search
of something that happened long ago
and mingled with the dust.

When I entered the backyard of our home
my heart missed a beat :
the warm and cosy house was now
but a heap of earth, collapsed to the ground.
Orphaned it lay with all the ancient memories
buried in it, the grass growing on it...
The well, full of water once, was dry and empty.
The garden, once a playground of multicoloured
butterflies,
was now a barren place, flowerless, greenless.
The surviving coconut trees, four or five,
stood forlorn, sighing with outstretched necks.

The mango tree, once dark at daytime,
spreading cool shade for generations,
was now bare and bald, creating
a huge hole in the sky.
A strange root had sprung up from the ground
strangling the tree from bottom to top.
The flowers we grew once—marigolds,
sajje, dasala, tulasi, and white nityapushpas—
all gone with the wind.
The pomegranate tree, a single sapling we watered
once,
was now standing alone, grown to my height,
aimless, pointless.

I stood as though I was walking in sleep.
The world, which was filled with life and laughter
was now, like a body all lifeless,
a ruined place of the length of a hundred yards or so,
fed by winds, rains, sun and cold,
lying curled up, staring vacantly...
Mother's love, father's love, brothers' love—
filled my memory and mind with misery.
Mother went away, brother went away, father too,
With them a whole world
into the dust.
This is the way of the world, this !

Sadness filled my heart
like blood from a raw wound.
Suddenly evening descended
even on the midday sun,
and mist on all my mind.

Between then and now had flown twelve years—the river of time—ruthless, heartless.

Translated by S. K. DESAI

V. K. GOKAK

(*Vinayaka*)

Afternoon

The fierce sun, the ancestor of Hitler,
has created a boundless prison.
The stone sweats and
the creeper dries up.
The bee is asleep in the pomegranate flower.
The body oozes and
the soul flies ;
the eyes are half-open.
The blue, blue sky is pierced
by a terrible white dagger of light,
and the poison has spread everywhere,
An old kestrel
goes round and round,
like the black flag of God Yama—
a la la la la la !
What a world, what an age !
Ga ga ga ga !

Translated by S.K. DESAI

A Leafless Tree

I

It doesn't have a single leaf
 and that itself is its beauty!
 My heart rushes towards it
 continuously with joy!
 My soul-bird flies about it
 among its leafless boughs
 freely, expecting nothing
 neither buds nor flowers nor fruits.
 The naked form, with innumerable angles -
 That is more than enough, I think!

II

The mathematics of angles—
 ah ! what great gymnastics !
 Boughs rising from the trunk,
 branches shooting from the boughs,
 and tendrils sprouting at the ends
 in subtle patterns!
 From the trunk to the top there are
 a hundred forms, projecting
 the entire series of Euclid's theorems :
 triangle, radius, square, circumference,
 diameter, diagonal—
 then
 Why do we need colours?
 and why the leaves?

III

My love went down to the bare roots
 and coursed up everywhere.
 Beauty streamed through all the boughs
 and turned into leaves, animating the tree,
 inviting the breezes: it's life's juice
 budding, sprouting, red and beautiful—
 my love turning to raw fruits and ripe
 loading the tree till it swayed about.
 It's magic fructifying the Void!

IV

There's electric charge in the network of its branches,
 but no lightning of creepers in it.
 This is a ready made *veena* ; the Spring,
 the player hasn't fingered it yet.
 It's a skeleton made by the machine-yogi :
 blood hasn't coursed through it.
 This is Arjuna's chariot, with no Krishna
 driving it triumphantly.
 It's not the Spring-chariot of joy
 with a garland of tender leaves.
 The magician west wind hasn't come
 and uttered the *mantras* of Spring.

V

Oh boughs! Oh branches!
 Why have you stretched your hands towards the sky ?
 Do you think the rain of mercy
 will fall from the sky and nourish you ?
 What use that army of clouds
 wandering like vagabonds ?
 You'd better stretch your roots a little more deeply.

Life is in the depths.
The rain of grace which had fallen once
is now a subterranean stream :
it will nourish you, and tomorrow
the Spring rain might come down,
like Dharma, to protect and bless !

Translated by S. K. DESAI

JAYASUDARSHANA

The Bound

A pleasure that leaps towards the boundless
Sprouting fresh shots upon the boundary-line,
Hiding itself with the horizon and going beyond,
One in the retinue of the waking consciousness, upward
looking
One without a second, an act that bridges the gulf
Between the voice and the echo. Slug in time's ceaseless-
ness.

The bounds are committed to their limit.
He, who, shut-eye, sees light is the Englightened One.
But no, this delight is beyond the relevance of the image.
A universe born and brought up on a wet dream.

Ah ! Do you know the little slug in the boundary-line
Into which consciousness is delivered of an experience ?
Do you know how the spider imagines the unlimited web
And lets itself be caught, slips into the gossamer thread
And accepts with delight those limited lines of support ?
Add day to other days declaring the bounds for freedom
And thinks sluggishness the law of growth ?
Dhawala Giri struck light in the darkness beyond the sky's
blue.

The vale sees the peak hid behind the mist,
 And doubts : Does existence exist ?—That doubt itself
 Is the boundary-line of existence.

The adventure of the eye stumbles against the horizon
 Limit must pair with limit. The poor limitless
 Never had the luck to gain epithet or comparison.
 Nothing can be absolute here. The Relative
 Alone can absorb the expectancy, and be the mover too.
 The false is only suppressed possibility.
 The memory of past splendour is the over-scribbled sheet for
 the miscalculated sum.
 The civilized animal raves against limits of civilization,
 Melts within himself, delves into his own innards
 In search of excitement.

Envy the monkey or the squirrel on tree-top,
 Denounces evolutionism, at any rate, finds no use for it
 And testifies the past alone from the point in the present
 All letters culled on the path traversed
 Are his unwritten verses ; He carries them in his armpit
 As the smile of the unwritten verse for the future.
 This is status quo become stable state.
 The struggle of time kicking himself for escape
 And deceiving his saunter progress, a comforting self-cheat.
 The cursing of the intolerable fact into a ghosthood of
 dream.
 The disgrace of pursuing the soil after sowing the infructuous
 seed.
 The frozen sea which has lost the shore.
 The artificial sojourn of undersurface drift.
 The easy self-denial, tied up to the comfort thereof.
 The ghost of time breathed its sighs into the tombs
 And brought barrenness to the land.

In this happiness ?
 Yes, for the chiseller of the sense.
 Dragging high heavens to bed companionship
 You eased your non-fulfilment in an act of self-abuse.
 In the lust for the boundless you broke your top
 On the threshold of your limits
 And became slave of life through suicide.
 You shut out your eye from the lucid light in search of vision
 In the empty spaces of your mind.
 In bridging the gulf between the bound and the boundless
 You deserved neither, lost both citizenships.
 Maybe the boundless exists somewhere beyond this chaos,
 But having lost the personal eye, you lost your sense of life,
 And since you yourself were unaware of your existence,
 Who could have borne witness of the Boundless ?
 The limited knows and is discontent like the sea
 Rolling between the shore and the horizon.

The boundless was never aware of itself ; when it did,
 It was bound by the illusion of limit.
 And you, torn between such guesswork of possibilities
 Bore false witness to both light and darkness.
 You are more bound than all other simple souls.
 And I who am the counter-Buddha
 Like an empty dawn shut my eye to your vision
 And still beyond the stars by the open day.
 Why talk of Buddha ? He left never to return.

Translated by S. MOKASHI-PUNEKAR

CHANDRASEKHAR KAMBAR

The Bull

tearing asunder the rein of rope, snorting heavily,
pushing aside those restraining it, getting out of hand,
indifferent to spectators' cries, jumping the fence,
it comes, the wild bull.

it belches fiercely,
from its widened snout oozes haughtiness,—drops
from moonlight's beehive.

the confidence to swim, straightening fan-like ears,
the pool of wind.

the thirst to empty off the pot
by sucking from the lip-fringes of whomever is in its way.

a body of fire body all mouth, a wild hunger
to consume whatever is available wherever in gulps.

the wizardry of churning with sight the corners of space.
digs with its feet the senses in turmoil,
kicking up dust that obliterates distinctions between
objects!

the hump tilting, the swollen ropes of the backbone
 burst;
 within, a Gulf Stream, whose whirlpool waters,
 wrench the roots of nerves in the thigh.

hey ! you, girl, smoothing your hair with fingers
 frequently,
 and talking in riddles, watch out, and leave way;
 otherwise take care of the lovely roses
 grown on your cheeks and lips !

OUT of the single white are created seven colours.
 earth has donned the faded dust of green anyway,
 what could be seen through the tearings is white skin !
 how red was the sky !

the toddy in the ghats spilled, fragmented,
 leaked into a river; on the bank
 the play of waves being disrupted in their neat folds.

Playing in the belly of the flower,
 tickling the straight bamboo of eighteen years of youth,
 this wind whistles in the cave relaying a code of mischief.

the shoots and flowers on the fence are slanting eyes.
 the creeper studded with buds is the blouse.

I am the hero of the tale of every girl I espy,
 and whatever is wrapped in a saree disturbs me to the
 roots of my life
 the yellow swooning at the overwhelming wealth of
 green, tell me,
 when shall I capture beauty,
 when shall I wed ?

THIS was the the first time now
 I was aware of the existence of heat.

the shoot buried in the plant,
 already grown in the desires of Springs
 spreads as grass on the river bank,
 availing of every opportunity.

the earth gapes with an elect desire.

the moment that inherits its wealth,
 the game of limitless green amazed at the dying deaths,
 this is play, girl, come, I have unriddled you !

Translated by K. RAGHAVENDRA RAO

Protesters

We are the protesters, Sir
 We are the protesters.

Born of two people's protest
 bred in many people's protest—

We ask, ask our parents—
 why aren't we like them—or
 why aren't we like anybody else ?

Dressed in protest, fixing
 an open eye and a wide mouth
 to our face, we smile—
 scarecrows standing at the wealthy
 mansion of Manu and the useless *Purāṇas*—
 we protested against your vision
 Sir,
 We are the protesters.

Translated by S. K. DESAI

CHENNAVEER KANAVI

The Pageant of Earth

I

Whirls, the flaming core,
split away but cooled none knows when ;
but who says it is cooled; still shimmers
the burning pit deep in its heart !
rivers of fire rush
within the cool sea;
above in the smooth sky plays smoke.
fallen,
in twisted shapes lie hills and caves—
the accumulated pain of aeons !
doubt creeps deep in the chasm.

having drunk some juice from the boiling womb of
earth myriad green hopes
daily burst !
they stare high from the turrets of earth's corners :
beyond eye's horizon revolve spheres,
hugging and pulling each other—
playfully dancing together,
they reach the endless circle !

Around the image of evening and morning sun—
 light, noiselessly shouldering the moon in the sky's yard
 on the threshing-floor of sky piling up a harvest
 of stars,
 sifting the grain of Life into a heap
 wheels and wheels !

II

In earth's house a child opens its eyes !
 from the windows the young sunlight
 plays its stick in the verandah and the corner ;
 the moon stretches his hand through the window and
 calls.

In the sky's bit of mirror the stars laughed
 and in the street of sky move hundred silver chariots !
 over the crest of flowers in the nearby trees
 the swing of song—
 as the lessons of arithmetic are chanted in the class,
 there stands on the table the whole globe.
 the pigeon feeds its young in the nest.
 beyond the window, far away in hills and plains
 the rich harvest of imagination, grown by the first
 monsoon !

In the heart of earth sprouts friendship, flows,
 everywhere floods the moonlight,
 and before eyes the procession of earth
 from here to the temple of sky !

III

In the dark room flows the full-moon glow,
 spilling a riot of colours on walls of earth.
 How lovely, the month of wind as it sways in a
 marriage procession !
 All attention riveted to it.
 Came and went rebellious rainy seasons, one after
 another—

thundering, threatening, drumming, dancing,
 lifting and swelling the mug of toddy !
 though drunkenly unsteady, the walls manage to
 stand ;
 goes down the foundation ; the weight on it is
 unbearable ;
 though every year earth is put, it is the same woeful
 tale !
 on the roof the fortress of lining ants,
 from the ceiling fall baskets of earth, as the rats run
 and play,
 everywhere there are subterraneous routes !
 in the night, around the blind light dance shadows.
 in the darkness that is hardly there ;
 in the streets lights go off every now and then !
 at every square the sound of boots, whistles,
 and one is scared of venturing beyond the threshold—
 taking it all in all
 it is a bad lot.

above wherever eyes roam, a garland of lights,
 the wondrous dancing hall of blue light,
 in the womb of earth groans the wild cock daily.
 darkness grown like an ant-hill wherever one moves,
 yet how mysterious
 that it should feed and live on light—
 in birth and death rings the song of triumph.
 the tree that shivered in winter,
 now stands in the centre of the street like a bedecked
 chariot !
 who refuses it ?
 Beat the tabor, blow the horn, let pass
 the rapt procession—
 Oh life !
 I wish you well.

Translated by K. RAGHAVENDRA RAO

B.R. LAKSHMANA RAO

A Photographer

I go take pictures of a wedding
for money, for pleasure.
The place is full of people—bustle, splendour and
gaiety,
the rustle of sarees, the beat of drums,
food, coffee, hospitality...
None invites me to eat and drink.
I sit in an empty chair in a corner and watch :
the dry chatter of the old, bent with age;
the chirping vanity of over-ripe maidens;
the anxiety of men.

The *kashiyātra*, *dhare*, *māngalya-dhārana* etc.—
by the time the various ceremonies are done
I get to know
the lotus-faces of a number of the princeless female-pearls—
their glances, laughter, dramatics
and their names.

My side-whiskers, goggles, silk shirt
tight pants, pointed shoes
and Tony Curtis smile excite

the curiosity and admiration of a number of girls
and the dumb jealousy of a number of boys.

When I lift my head,
my camera eye sees
a girl, leaning against the stairs,
absorbed, lifting her leg—
and up it goes
till
the naked, white flesh of her thighs
and stops
thrilled somewhat.

When they call me for a bite,
for politeness' sake
I say, 'No thank you.'

In the evening
in the hustle of the reception,
in the bustle of the music concert,
the gather round me,
shower their affection,
burn with desire,
show off, smile sweetly
smiles of acquaintance,
lift an eyebrow, throw a side glance
and make me feel
that my life's fulfilled—
these women, these beauties.

I click the flash at every edge and every curve
and suck in their beauty
into my camera.

At night, before sleeping
I recall their faces one by one
and ruminate :

Radha—Padma—Pankaja—Mala—Vishala—Sunceta—

Indian Poetry Today

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I invite the dreams
in vain, in vain !

At last
the next evening
I hand them over
their respective photos;
they run their eyes with mutual admiration,
with a catch in the throat they laugh
and go away to their respective places,
leaving behind with me
only fading memories,
the negatives.

Translated by S.K. DESAI

P. LANKESH

Mother

My mother, black, prolific earth,
green leaf, a festival of white flowers.
With every burn, the earthier ; with every pang
more fruit and petal.
Limbs that thrill to children's kicks.
Laying down the basket on her head,
she groaned, and closed eyes never again to open.

Raised a hundred measures of millet
to please father and win a bracelet for the arm,
swilling water for each clod of earth ;
pepper, pea, millet and grain she ploughed with her
hand,
blossoming in flowers, ripening in fruit,
she watched over cereal fields,
spending all youth in a tatter of sarees,
She died, she did :
What's the age of a hag bent double ?
How many New Year moons, how many festivals of
sweet bread
Over the live coal ? How many times she wept,
this old woman, for coin, for dead calf and ruined
grain ?

roamed villages, how many times,
for an ancient runaway buffalo ?

No, not Savitri, Janaki, nor Urmile;
nor a heroine out of history books, tranquil, fair,
grave
in dignity; nor like the wives of Gandhi
and Ramakrishna. Did not worship the gods,
nor listen to holy legends, nor did she wear
like a good auspicious wife
any vermilion on her brow.

A wild bear
bearing a litter of little ones,
she reared a husband, saved coins
in knots of cloth; like a hurt bitch,
she snarled, grumbled and fought.

Mean, crooked, ready to scratch
like a monkey;
the only rule :
whatever raises a family.
Would flare up and burn
only if son went wild
or husband elsewhere.

A wild jungle bear has no need for your *Gita*.
My mother lived
for stick and grain, labour and babies;
for rafter overhead, rice, bread, a blanket;
to walk upright among equals.

Admiration, tears of thanks :
for bearing and raising;
living in mud and soil, and
for leaving as she did, as if
leaving home for the fields,
cool, in the middle of small talk.

Translated by A. K. RAMANUJAN

SHANKAR MOKASHI-PUNEKAR

The Three Faces of Mother

(Haven't seen her fourth face as yet)

mother, great mother,
our mother in three distinct ways.
(mother the rearer; the adoptive mother; mother the bearer.)
first you come as mother the rearer
looking after us as we grow carefree.
growing a new adventitious root of affection,
sending it to ground, you make the soil your own.
a trunk whose red is so delicate as to soil at touch—
supports each bough that is twisted.
those who have eaten from your loving hands
have lost the strength of their forearms.
being our eyes' pupil, would you make us blind ?
offering a gift of shade, would you make the plant barren ?

then you come as the adoptive mother,
hanging a sign-post of duties.
deep desire, pride, duty, firmness,
ideals, spiritedness, contempt, habit—
like the relationship between Chanakya and Chandragupta.
the cruel maternal love of Vidula
at every word, rivalry, possessiveness, spiritedness,
the interest you demand far exceeds the capital you
loaned.

raising the seated one by his ears,
you demand accounts to the last coin.
hearing your conch-call, "Rush forth",
blessed is he who has yet energy left to obey it.

in our last days you come as mother the bearer.
like the barking dog behind the dreams behind dreams.
as if to ridicule the three paths of the sky,
in the navel go on worries and sorrows.
the conquerors of death have fled from the battle.
have begged and entreated the gone moment.
if we win the battle or would they win ?
so shivered the nerves, while the muscles grew tight.
it was in the arms; not in the fold below the navel.
the spirit that was in the bow was not there in the arms.
the coward flesh belied the mind's words of firmness.
the ladder leaning against the sky collapsed.
can the eyes glimpse the net that the belly spreads ?
can life cross the line drawn by pregnancy ?

he who can grasp the essence of this song by
frequent meditation
will seek out mother's fourth face.

Translated by K. RAGHAVENDRA RAO

Light and Shade

When I turn my back on light and proceed
I stumble against my shadows.
Shall I face the light ?...my eyes get blinded.
When light has conspired to blind the eye,
What might the eye do ?

...blinded by shades !
 ...blinded by light !
 When the left hand fights the right, how will the
 mad Siddha of the cremation ground eat his cake ?
 When mummy and daddy fight where will little
 Chennayya hide ?
 Whose shelter shall I seek ?
 No one's ! I shall stand in between.
 I shall raise my hut on the thin border between two
 truths,
 Since shadow is as much the truth
 As light.
 When truths confront each other,
 Their war is real bitter.
 When Nara and Narayana fight, whom would you
 back up ?
 And when will the fight end ?
 The paper balloons must burn,
 The star must get fuzzy and dissolve into the original
 nebula,
 The smoke-filled bag must collapse,
 And then only the fight will end
 For the lack of a rival...
 And then,
 The light and shadow locked in a tremendous hug
 Won't see each other
 And vanish into a final blindness.
 God who made eyes doesn't have eyes
 What does he know the agony of those who can see ?
 That's why we contemptuously named him Deva.
 And we called ourselves Manavas
 in our pride and responsibility,
 But when I too lose my eyes
 Wherever I go shall be my territory.
 And I shall call both light and shadow mine own.

Translated by the POET

SUMATINDRA NADIG

This is Love !

You think you have the right to snatch
my heart's right to laugh—
you are eager to kill me—to grind me
into sobs, beyond limits of cruelty
and you smile innocently.
This is love, this your generosity.

There is nothing wrong in your knowing
the technique of killing.
But knowing the magic words that make me live
you are indifferent—and that strangles me.
Enchantress, you show your shining ring
and throw ashes in my eyes—
and wind your hair round my neck
and play the cruel game—
This is love and this your generosity
It is better to kill at once, at one stroke—and
this crucifixion in front of your smiling face
must end for ever !

Translated by S.K. DESAI

K. S. NARASIMHA SWAMY

A Consolation for Unfilled Pots

the waterless water-pipe consoles the unfilled pots
in the scorching noon sun.
not a head bobs in the street;
there all is sun's heat !

the limitless, ill-fated, blue sky is lifeless.
(the night's talk is all right for the night; what about now !)
not a white cloud, no peace, dear God !
beyond the breathing of a lakh of people, beyond the
town,

in somebody's ruined field,
the town's cattle in clusters graze rubbish, heads down ;
a minute back

the melody of bells round the neck flowed over the
fence.

before the rocks rises the conical temple-tower of smoke,
the dry leaves burn, not like the burning of Love God,
Kāma.

at the doors of the temple the noiseless march of
mirage-horses;—

without a necklace of pearls, no God astride them,
they don't bite, don't kick—horses only in name !
who is interested in this tradition of bygone pomp and
pageant ?

for the tired, lame wind blowing from the wild-plum
 bush
 even the mud-roof is tall as a mountain.
 in the far-off road where dust rises
 a lorry breathes hard.
 the plane in the sky
 is terribly slow.
 like a needle without thread piercing blue cloth.
 the eyes of loveliness wear the colour of dust ;
 the trees and creepers with chaotic hair have dried up
 in the sun.
 the lamp of thirst burns
 low on the lips of the poem.
 this is a hell, greenless, marshless, unbreathing.
 this old tree is all empty cavity ;
 no bird comes here to rest ;
 no monkey swings from it ;—
 what could be precisely its immortal meaning ?
 its life has shrivelled up from sucking a hundred springs;
 its body is the home of snakes.
 who is eager to befriend it ?
 may a tempest blow
 and fell it in mercy !
 what colour did the eyes of beauty acquire ?
 what is it that burns low on the lips of the poem ?
 in ancient books it has been already said :
 "a filled pot ripples not" :

(the writing is admittedly admirable.)
 in a thousand streets tomorrow
 the procession of Bhāgirathī, goddess of water.
 the waterless water-pipe harangued with consolation
 the unfilled pots
 in a soft voice ;
 "a filled pot ripples not."
 even an unfilled pot does not ripple,

and even if it does, no matter,
 but when will water arrive ?
 there is no answer.
 the waterless water-pipe consoles the unfilled pots :
 "a filled pot ripples not."

Translated by K. RAGHAVENDRA RAO

The Shuttered Window

I did not know earlier
 that there was a window in the wall you are watching.
 Later it showed : the frame painted with red-earth,
 years of dust settled on the broken glass-panes.

Even when I took the house,
 that window was shut. When I asked about it,
 the neighbour said, "The previous occupant, its owner,
 was a good man, strong in body,
 but he suddenly died where he sat,
 and he died under inauspicious stars.
 It was rumoured his life must have escaped through
 that window.

As soon as the telegram hit him, his son-in-law alighted
 on the scene like a vulture, with his barren wife ;
 he cried a little decently, engineered a procession,
 lighted the funeral pyre, and rushed back straight here.

He fought the lonely window in the room of death ;
 (He had heard the corpse-carriers in the place of the
 dead say that the unsatiated old man
 would return through that very window.)

He closed it, cemented it, nailed it, and kicked it,
 left a mess. and left thundering—
 the door of the room of death was left intact;
 the front door of the house was opened for rent.

“How can you hire it, you have children?
 Your bad stars ! Well, have it your way. At least
 take some precaution. Let none you love
 touch that window.”

I couldn't help laughing at this fellow,
 who lived in fear of his wife's voice—
 What one ear heard, I let out through the other.
 I had doubts about him, not the dead man.

Should the dead man return, he has no place here :
 Already we are eleven, including the one in the cradle.
 The dead man cannot return. And if he does,
 his body is too large for the window.

It is a house, not a shop,
 After all, if I don't labour all day elsewhere,
 how can one light the kitchen fire ?
 For our transactions, one door is enough.
 Let the window be.

If need be, there are other windows,
 They can be opened—to provide passage for the
 sparrows,
 to let the street look in, for the comfort of the seasons,
 and for small transactions that do not need doors.

Only what comes through the doors is not enough,
 we should get some more through the window !
 Some principle is hidden somewhere here.

From the closed window even now drifts to us
the ceaseless voice of the neighbour's virago wife :
You are staring stone-hard at the shuttered window.
You ask : Who closed it and why ?
I have no answer for you now.

Here is plenty for the digging intellect ;
What flashed is a star, and the rest is the sky.

Translated by K. RAGHAVENDRA RAO

K. S. NISAR AHMED

A Twentieth Century Columbus

the one who aspired to the silver line in every corner
of the sky,
dreamed of wealth in stone, water in soil, path in
forest.
though stumbling amidst laughing scoundrels, I rise,
determined to win, and go with the caravan of warriors.
you can't even burn the memory of the town you leave,
and the path you took is lost for ever.
on the way to the palace, a bevy of beauties—
"Cannon to their left, cannon to their right"
I could have seen, enjoyed and merrily gone about;
could have trodden the road rutted by relatives;
all of a sudden the midnight sleep turned into the noise
of a shandy,
and the courage of a prince followed me.
when time lay tired on the poop,
the night blossomed and awoke,
above there was a swarm of stunned stars :
"Do not thirst for water in the desert land,
return to the place you left,
why love the shadow-deep gaff ?"

—behind the lovely cloud, the factory of lightning,
 but can you believe this ?
 did I merely feed a snake ?
 have to drag on my life in the company of hunters !
 this beam has been eaten away by white ants for a
 century,
 try how I will, these eyes yield no sleep !
 this was the show that took place—
 the sharp pangs of the vulture-eyed hunger
 as it opens out a mouth unfed, in the dark
 beneath a hanging sword;
 mind is a race-horse,
 intelligence is scared, bereft of the rein !
 a drop at leaf's tip, I stood, trusting to the support a
 ladder of thread
 a short while before the cock would blow its bugle;
 at the sight of the bows with the Todas and the Bhils
 I go dumb,
 shouldn't the green show the lines on earth ?
 an old man, I raised eyebrows, lifted a hand, pushed
 the mist to a side,
 and let my eyes flow;
 mouth is a door ajar; finger on nose, and the heart
 dumb !
 in the far-off horizon steps steeped in sunrise colour,
 and dust, tree and plant blush strangely !
 the eastern sky is a treasure of loveliness,
 bush, tree and creeper are stores of melody—
 a new world, a new world
 "Eureka ! Eureka !"

evening planted its flag of victory on the western hills.
 I entered the thighs of the sea :
 the heart's desire grew wings ;
 as a quivering wave rose and danced,
 the boiling blood heated every nerve;
 the longer I flew, the farther were the bounds of my
 motherland !

I have the obsession to gauge the waves that ripple
 in others' hearts,
 and so I became a seismograph;
 in the unfamiliar rocks walks lightning,
 has covered hundreds of miles !

I am the stone that has been thrown higher and higher :
 sick of the fringe of dust I tried to befriend the stars—
 I lifted my face higher and higher.
 but it's odd the sky wouldn't embrace me;
 the wind wouldn't sustain me,
 and did I fall back to the lap of this wretched earth ?
 what pageant and bustle on the sandy bank ?
 why do children of the land shout in joy ?
 Oh, yes ! I soon knew !

I have donated sight to the whole creation—
 am the sun who has righted the cosmic twist,
 have halted life which had lost its way,
 and said to myself that I was the father of the universe;
 a whole crowd of people
 awaits my arrival,
 holding in hands garlands of light.
 do I look an ordinary fellow ? an ambassador
 from beyond the desert,
 the hero riding the sea's back !
 guffawed :

the pupils of my eyes burn like coal; axe, pick-axe
 and spade !
 remembering the sky caught in the embrace of the stars,
 I laughed !

Why is the world deaf to the steps
 of shadows that crush my life every moment ?
 I am just this for the world :
 a piece of sandalwood that vanishes as it is ground !

Translated by K. RAGHAVENDRA RAO

A Lesson

The poets of the Wordsworthian clan
counselled the beatnik Gregory Corso :
"Brother, open your inward eye and write,
Stop being a slave to the so-called reality
of life's misery and complexity.

Let a scene from nature
teach you a lesson.
Look at that tree, free from life's hediousness,
generous and harmless.
Be happy and give it your thanks."

Corso banged the table before him and said,
"This is the gratitude we have shown
to that noble, wonderful tree."

Translated by S. K. DESAI

CHANDRASEKHAR PATIL

At the Other End

Here lies beside me
Stretched out and parallel to my body
Another body, crying,
It's yours, embrace it, embrace it.
Turning,
And burning as I reach it,
It cools me down,
Quenching fire with fire.

Later a cool drowsy sleep
Wraps me up,
The drowsiness of the day as it penetrates
Slowly the womb of night.
The pulses and veins go numb,
The body blossoms under the burning cold
And all I do is mutter in my airy dreams.
But who are you,
Chuckling at the other end of my dreams ?
Are you the one that I loved ?
The one that loved me ?

Translated by K. RAGHAVENDRA RAO

SIDDHALINGA PATTANASHEETTI

The Husk

as I, twinning the nerves,
tying up your arms in sandal,
stood straightening the thread,
in what sky the first words tumbled out !

you are a daughter of fire,
I am ghee incarnate,
swallowing our spring,
in what forest did green lament !

at the very mention of your name,
the flower blossomed scattering fragrance,
to the kite of my eyelash you are the tail
as we flew in a sky of imagination
which thread got wrongly knotted where !

sowing steel, growing jasmines
squeezing honey we drank every day,
unknown to us
like the fall of a comet
our whole life turned meaningless !

you were in the womb of the flowing water
but I sought you in a muddy pool,
you were hiding behind a curtain of thoughts
but I desired you for mundane transactions

you were a star in the sky's azure
but I saw you in a reflection in the pond,
having given another birth to Sita,
this mad, stupid mind,
why did it search for you in the *Ramayana* !

Translated by K. RAGHAVENDRA RAO

A. K. RAMANUJAN

An Umbrella and a Watch

Father gave me,
while I was still a child, a little
umbrella and a watch.

He was six feet tall
and his umbrella would be
two or three feet above him.
So when I, a three-foot
dwarf,
walked by his side in rain,
my body would all be wet and muddy.

While going
my left side would be wet, while coming
my right side.

His creaking chappals
would raise at every step a spray of mud
from top to toe.

Even after the rain stopped
It would fall drip drop drip
on my head.
'Ah, poor chap !' father would say,
bend and walk like a dwarf

and lower his umbrella :
that would make me laugh and laugh indeed.

But

when he lowered his umbrella
my eyes, nose and neck would be in
danger : the umbrella wires would peck me
with their ends.

It is very difficult to walk
under father's umbrella.
So he got me an umbrella
and with it, as a keepsake, a new watch.

After I had the new umbrella,
father would hold his under the rain
and I mine
under his.

But

brother played donkey with my umbrella
and broke its stick. One Sunday a storm
turned the black cloth
upside down.

As for the watch,
it worked for a week and then stopped.
I was angry
and put it in granny's betel-nut grinder
and pounded it away.

Mother

gave me a piece of her mind and beat me
and cleared it by sweeping away
its wheels, spring, hands, and feet.

for many days
poor granny, toothless except for two teeth,
would pound betel-leaves, areca nuts and all
and while chewing would say :

"Why, Ramu, it tastes as though
a wheel or a tooth of a watch
has been ground into it."

Translated by S. K. DESAI

If One Wants that Bird

You know,
there was a king in Mongolia,
 who once invaded some
distant kingdom, where
he heard a new bird singing,
and wanted the song for himself.
For the sake of the song, he wished to capture
the bird, with the bird its nest,
the branches that held the nest,
the trunk of the tree, the tree itself,
the roots, the earth that held the roots,
the village,
the water,
the surrounding land,
the country,
the entire kingdom...

 Wanting to take them all
he gathered together all the remaining
elephants, horses, chariots
and soldiers,
conquered the entire kingdom,
annexed it to his empire

and never returned home.

Translated by S.K. DESAI

PEJAWAR SADASHIV RAO

A Festival of Dance

Take this,
the song surrendered to you, Lorenzo II Magnifico !
In today's festival,
in the bustle and burst of youth,
in this ritual burning of the young,
in this experiencing of life to the dregs,
Master, yours is the first seat,
and today we have learnt your lesson !
We dance now
to the airborne strains of jazz music !
Lo ! There is the wine—
meant to quench our thirst !
The glass cut in Venice,
the joy of the drink from Sardinia,
and darkness engulfing us ;
all round, the festive gaiety,
the dream of a foreign land
colouring the singing;
closing in on us,
lovely women, scattering their youth,
exuding the hot scent of desire !
"Who are you ?" "I am Spanish.

There is Italian, and there German."
 "Who are you ?" "I am Greek."
 There before us, the whole herd,
 the herd of those flashing silk,
 half-wrapped and half-flesh,
 planting its bright flag in the sky
 aspiring to victory,
 and waiting hungrily for the male !
 In the body, the passion for struggle,
 and, if suppressed a little, it would turn into
 a blossom of desert smile,
 the smoke from a thousand cigarettes,
 the face washed in honey,
 unhinge the mind;
 on a song's wave,
 as the dinghy of dances drifted,
 the brave ones cast their nets,
 watched for fish,
 but the fish calculated endlessly,
 sized up this girl and made that one dance,
 gently smiling, they swam
 past the nets.
 Two faces has life—
 one joy and the other sorrow :
 Friend, why worry about the morrow ?
 Today is bursting with joy,
 see the singing rise in crescendo !
 The lights are all dimming !
 In the blind, blue light,
 grab her in your arms,
 play secret games together,
 give your shoulder for her face to rest,
 be a prop to her creeper-body,
 support her with hands of wood.
 Matching melody and rhythm,
 in but two sweet words,

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let lips suck from each other
the juices of life !
Darkness surrounds us,
everywhere is pageantry,
and all around us, lovely women !
Let me push heavy learning out
this one night, out of conceit !
This night,
I make life as I take it !
I shall pierce to the centre of earth,
and taste its essence !
I shall for once flash with lightning,
and then pass into night's blackness !

Translated by K. RAGHAVENDRA RAO

RAMACHANDRA SHARMA

The Sevenfolded Fort

I

a sevenfolded fort
within and without serpent-guarded !
right beneath the centre palace
steps descend to a secret cellar !
there weeps a lovely princess.
there is but one way to defend her honour—
the steam, flame, poison or the knife !
should life and death be thinly divided by a mere half
an hour ?
wouldn't the prince rush to his beloved,
crossing the sevenfolds,
brushing aside a hundred soldiers
and brandishing his sword ?
hark ! the sound of steps ! father, should I trust my eyes ?
who is he before my eyes ?
did the sweet dream of days and nights come down to
earth ?
'darling, here I come.
I have finished off the villain,
and for your sake !'
the face shone with smile; the eyes solicited welfare ;

the land swallowed poison
 and for a century lived in happiness Love and Beauty !
 mixed with granny's tale are the games of top, sticks,
 the *bolas*, marbles, stone and ball.
 into this universe
 came, came a child !

II

should I say, it came ?
 did the drum announce the Master's arrival ?
 did the pilot car pass by ?
 did you see the sky's cotton pieces whirl against the
 blue ?
 tell me when precisely fragrance arrived to the flower.
 did the child come ?
 or was it after all at home !
 did it then emerge like a memory
 from deep hiding, concealing itself !
 the awareness of the child's arrival arrives only after it
 arrives.
 sweet face; lovely body; entreating eyes.
 'I have come depending on you.
 all I ask is room enough to stay; nothing to eat.'

III

finding it pleasant to play with the child,
 I hardly noticed how year to year,
 month to month, and day to day,
 spent themselves !
 there was no gap in the joy that filled the heart.
 the day I was eighteen was also the day the child
 turned eighteen.
 the bonds of our friendship grew from moment to
 moment.

the eyes donned the glasses the friend gave.
 it's sheer joy to watch the wealth of loveliness the
 earth wears !

before disappearing into the flower,
 the bee turned its face to me and winked once.
 the creeper that had imprisoned the mango tree
 dancing its body, scattered its smile flowers to
 provoke me. (How proud it was !)
 over the full-grown breasts,
 the golden fingers of the evening sun play !
 below lies unrolled a bed of grass ;
 above the soft blanket of moonlight—
 from the shade,
 the beauty of a woman's bemused voice bursting into
 laughter !
 a sevenfolded fort.
 within a princess.
 the only way to defend her honour is,
 the stream, fire, poison or knife !
 can't you hear the lament ? move on !
 I am the prince : here I come,
 darling !
 no longer need you worry about losing your life.

IV

who came as a child stood as tall as the sky !
 I became child, no taller than a finger.
 he beat the rhythm ; I, the ghost, danced !
 wide as cosmos, taking hundred forms, he pestered me.
 taking residence in my body, he made me feel desire
 and pain as one !
 I became a thorny tree.
 the lava of desires lies prisoner in the volcanoes.

the mad river imprisoned in the body
 yearns to join the sea that knows not of the sun's existence !
 climbing the twin hills,
 descending the depths of the valley,
 flooding all space,
 inundating the forests to the left and right of the
 equator,
 this river yearns to make home on the sea's lap !

V

I am an old fogey.
 may be hopelessly mixed up about everything !
 who came as a child and became an equal
 first came the way he came in aeon ago—didn't he ?
 shadows merge into shadows to become night.
 the heart daydreams of the memory of neem-fruit
 and jaggery
 and a memory that recalls to the eyes a row of breasts ;
 even if you bury the details, it is handy,
 clear.
 'Grandpa, it's boring. Let's have a really good tale.'
 Listen, child :
 a sevenfolded fort.
 within and without serpent-guarded !'

Translated by K. RAGHAVENDRA RAO

G. S. SHIVARUDRAPPA

This Man

His cauldrons seethe.
In the nest of the heart
they tick :
a wreckage of clocks.

A hundred bogeys
shuttle night and day
upon these rails.

These are the noises; and then
the silence.

Light and dark goad him
as they run.
The embered east, and night
as she unfurls her parasol
of a million holes, and that flood
of sighs we call the wind,
all these run over him
without pity, without end.

Circuses, movies, restaurants,
 acrobatic shows,
 cigarettes, cards, snake-charming
 feats, poetry circles, and the high-falutin
 of endless talks,
 all that feast of myth and legend :
 these, and such as these,
 are placebos for his pain.
 From the cracks in his ceiling
 stream the rains, the thoughts,
 and muddy the floors. But
 green are the shoots of desire.

Still, despair
 does not drown him,
 he does not curse his gods,
 but bears like a patient pole
 a light upon his head.
 His silence, a fire, keeps a vigil
 in corruption's wakes and fairs...

Translated by A. K. RAMANUJAN

Under the Clock

Who knows since when it is working—
 This Clock;
 Seconds, minutes, hours—the hands mark
 Night and day.
 Hourly, half-hourly, rings its moan
 While the snow rolls in the veins;

Snow or sunshine (does it matter ?)
 The stars roll in the blue vault
 Undisturbed.
 Ceaselessly the river flows to the ocean.
 But the dark thirst of the salt waves
 Is never slaked
 For all the sweetness in the river flows.
 The cremation ground is thick with the ashes of
 burnt lives;
 Over a hundred graves the green grass grows !
 In the forts and battlements half-ruined
 Echoes
 The bat's leathery wing;
 While underneath,
 Excavating the remnants of lost cities,
 The archaeologist's spades
 Ring.

In the dead mid-dark he sat bolt upright;
 In the darkness' roar;
 And heard
 The gnashing of white teeth in the Dark Waters—
 Tick, tick, tick,
 The wrist watch near the pillow
 Shattering his bones.

The dawn-wind and the cock-crow called for
 a morning walk.
 But now the path of bloom and bud is over;
 The stark, bare avenue awaits him
 With a guard of honour by the skeleton-trees.
 He has walked over the dead leaves,
 The dry leaves,
 And now the shadow falls
 Of the sixtieth milestone.

Leaving his walking-stick in the corner
 He stood before the mirror :
 Head stamped with winter, cheeks sunk, eyes dull—
 His own portrait !
 On the wall is hung his photo
 Taken in the golden light of youth.
 It is on that the Clock is ticking,
 The huge Clock, tick, tick, tick.

It is a great temptation to stand before the mirror
 Plucking out the grey hair one by one;
 Or better, to dye it black,
 And well combed,
 Walk the streets in the old suit new pressed.
 But the radio blares :
 "Think of the Lord, O fool, think of the Lord."

He stumped into the chair engrossed
 Shutting out the tick of the clock.
 But his little grandchild comes lisping
 'Grandpa !'
 At that sweet sound
 The golden dawn light flashed
 Brightening the evening skies.

Translated by K. S. YADURAJAN

VENUGOPAL SORABA

Ali

The boxing champion came
holding the banner of good-will,
with a big entourage of
Ellis, Veronica and others,
to build the bridge of communication:
to unfurl the sails, furled since long.

Too many engagements to this
religious ambassador :
Even before he could open the closed fist,
the call from home
to fulfil some engagements.

To the heavy voice wishing
Assalam Alaikum
the once steely-framed body
is only a decor now :
with the only desire to
develop the inner glow.

Some kind of worry haunts me—
the worry that Ali's coming should be

more than his departure :
 Could this shimmering wax
 strengthen the bonds of different countries ?
 could it adapt the half of America
 to the other half of the world ?

Ali, you came and
 went back, as you came—
 to your black voice which
 cannot be suppressed, could the diamond necklace
 of America give a duty halo—
 thrown in her own selfishness ?

Ali, does the glow of your eyes,
 cast perfume on the diamond
 in Africa's dark bowel ?
 Does it spread the greenery of equality
 in the hearts of the non-coloured ?*

The mingling of so many voices
 in your prayer
 seems to console us to an extent.

Ali, come again,
 wishing a new birth to these people as well—
 come again !

Translated by the POET

* The expression *non-coloured* is used to connote all those who are not black.

Committed

I must become committed to
 The isms of Marx, Mao and Majumdar :
 The temper and swelling of the cultural revolution

I must become committed to
 The wisdom of the godly Buddha, Ashoka and Gandhi :
 The primitiveness and swelling of the burning non-violence.

I must become committed to
 The thirst of Timor, Chengiz Khan and Babur :
 The sweating and the pleasure of an empire—strong and
 happy.

I must become committed to
 The liberty of Rousseau, Voltaire and Jefferson;
 The vista and diligence of the basic human rights.

I must become committed to
 The immeasurable universe that is moving and expanding.
 The life and the skill born of carnal desire.

Translated by the POET

Mao Tse-tung

If Mao's smile could make history—
 Does not his death mean as much ?
 If Mao's swimming made the water red—
 Would not his death turn the greenery red ?

Indian Poetry Today

Taking off this coat called Mao, wearing a new one,
Launch on a new track, with a new song and a new step.
Will not with such a message the red become burnt up ?
Burning and perspiring give birth to the new red ?

Mao is a milestone. And what is there in its red ?
In the earlier days, the branches of success—
The fresh leaves of a new force, new food and a new word—
The umpire taste of progress of the cultural leap.

China—the land of Mao, will it not raise its head
And proclaim the message of Mao ?
Do not be coarse, being insensitive to Mao's death—
His death means a lot ! Salute his memory.

Translated by the POET

K. V. TIRUMALESH

Destiny

Did no one come here ?

Then what of the sound, that echo,
Those footsteps of a mysterious origin,
The jingling anklets, the dance and the beat,
The words chanted in secrecy—
Did they all vanish ? Whither did they go ?

Did nothing happen here ?

Then what of that symbol, that beckoning,
That ritual performed,
Flower, saffron and sacrifice,
The burnt incense and the dazzled lamp—
Did they all die out ? Whither did they go ?

In this vast sepulchral land

Human skeletons lie down,
A staff beside and a dry pitcher by the head,
And the shadeless earth is bare.
These discontented souls who fell
Before sighting their promised land
Gaze relentlessly from their hollow sockets—
Whither their God and the prophets who divined ?

Indian Poetry Today

Each is strung with a vengeful wish
 To be embodied again in flesh and blood.
 The past and the future glide into each other
 In their cavernous vision
 While time in a trance shapes the destiny
 From the urge of these sensibilities
 What course, what rhythm,
 What evolution ?

Has nothing survived here ?
 What then of the invisible shadows,
 Their demeanours and countenances,
 The necessity of all this disquiet—
 Did these who mourn here mourn before ?
 These sufferers—did they come suffering
 Through the ages ?
 What agony for such a plight !

Translated by the POET

The Untouchables

“Beware of Dogs !” Must you threaten thus,
 Taking cover behind the signboard ?
 We only pass by this road
 We talk when silence grows unbearable
 And laugh lest we should weep.

Must you threaten to let loose your hands on us ?
 You have hounds to hunt, you are the lords
 Of hounds, cars and five-star hotels
 You are the Gods of the cabaret paradise,
 On this side we exist, the untouchables.

Must you look on us as strangers ? Do you forget
 We have earned familiarity down the centuries.
 In Babylon we drudged at your tread-mill
 You sold us in auction market-places
 We bear the hump of slavery on our backs
 Our children are threatened by the same.

True, you came round for compromise
 But try our best
 You claim ignorance of our language
 What can be done ? You see,
 You shall understand it some time
 Against your wish, the understanding of which
 You shall regret.

Must you cry out hysterical ?
 While you have sealed off under your monopoly
 Literature, culture, wealth and power
 Why should you fret then ?
 Revolutions have come and
 Revolutions have gone
 Nevertheless your tribe has increased
 And it is still on the flourish
 Must you froth at the mouth then ?

Is it because history never repeats,
 The present never stays,
 The unknown is bound to happen ?
 We know this
 And because you fear we know,
 When you confront us
 Your faces look ghastly—
 This is only natural.

Translated by the POET

Notes on Poets

M. GOPALAKRISHNA ADIGA (b. 1918) has served various colleges as Principal and Professor; was the Deputy Director (Editorial) of National Book Trust, India; had also been the Editor of *Sakshi*—the most significant magazines devoted to literature and ideas; his books include *Anathe* (novel); *Mannina Vasane* (essays); *Bhavataranga*; *Bhoomi Geetha*; *Vardhamana*; *Idanna Bayasiralilla* (all poetry, the last received the Sahitya Akademi award).

U.R. ANANTHAMURTHY (b. 1932) is Professor of English, Mysore University; author of *Samskara*, the famous novel, which later became an award winning film; his other books include *Prashne* (short stories); *Hadinaidu Padyagalu Bawali* (poems); *Avasthe* (novel); his works have been translated into several Indian languages and in English.

D.R. BENDRE is author of *Gari*, *Nadalile*, *Murti matta Kamakasturi*, *Sakhi* etc.; his work *Aralu Maralu* won the Akademi award.

V.G. BHAT (b. 1923) is an officer in Cottage Industries Department of the Central Government, now in Bombay;

his books include *Arnya Rodana*, *Kāvyaavedane* and *Kishkinde*.

H.M. CHANNAIAH (b. 1935) is Reader in Kannada, Institute of Kannada Studies, Manasa Gangotri, Mysore ; is also Editor of *Prabhuddha Karnataka*—a quarterly and has six published works to his credit ; they include : *Kaml*, *Aame* (both poetry) ; *Yellaranthavanalla*, *Nana Ganda* ; *Atlas* (plays) ; *Jijnase* ; *Samvedane* (criticisms).

GANGADHAR CHITTAL (b. 1923) is Chief Auditor, Western Railways, Bombay ; his publications include *Kalade Kare* ; *Manukulada Hadu* ; *Hariwa Neeridu*. etc.

V.K. GOKAK (Vinayaka) (b. 1909) has served institutions of repute as Professor of English, at present associated with Shri Sathya Sai Baba Educational Institutions, Whitefield; one of the most distinguished writers, he has written in all forms : drama, novel, poetry, criticism ; his books include *Samarasave Jeevana* ((novel) ; *Bala Deguladalli* (poetry) ; *Nayya Kavitegalu* ; *Urnanabha* ; and *Dyava Prithivi*—the last was given the Sahitya Akademi award ; *The Song of Life* ; *In Life's Temple* (both Poetry in English) ; *Narahari—Prophet of New India* (novel) ; *An Integral View of Poetry* ; *The Concept of Indian Literature* (both criticism) ; recipient of the Padma Shri.

JAYASUDARSHANA (b. 1948) has published five books ; has received the Maharashtra State award, Nata Samrat and the Sahitya Akademi award.

CHANDRASEKHAR KAMBAR (b. 1938) teaches Kannada in the Department of Kannada, Bangalore University; his books include : *Heletana Kela*, *Takararinavaru* (poems); *Nareissus*, *Rishyeshringa*, *Chalesha* (plays).

CHENNAVEER KANAVI (b. 1928) is Director, Extension Service and Publications, Karnatak University; has received Bombay Govt. prize for *Akashabutti* (collection of poems), and Mysore Sahitya Akademi prize for *Deepadhari* (collection of poems); his other publications include *Eradu Dada*; *Nagaradalli Neralu*; *Sahitya Chintana*; and *Kavyanusandhana*.

B.R. LAKSHMANA RAO (b. 1946) teacher; he has published *Gopi Mattu Gaundaleena*, *Tuvataara*, *Lilliputtiya Hambala* (poetry), *Gesture* (stories), *Hee Gondu Prema Kathe* (novel), *Prema Sultvajada* (lyrics); his collections of poems won for him the Karnatak Sahitya Akademi award.

P. LANKESH (b. 1935), former Lecturer in English, Bangalore University, is presently Editor of *Lankesh Patrika*; a prolific writer, he has written short stories, novels, poems, plays and criticism; his books include *Kereya Neeranu Kerege Chelli* (stories); *Sankranti* (plays); *Biruku*, *Mussanjeya Katha prasanga* (novels); *Blechu*, *Thalemaru* (both poetry); has also translated Sophocles and Baudelaire into Kannada.

SHANKAR MOKASHI-PUNEKAR is Professor of English, Institute of Kannada Studies, Mysore University; has published *Gangavva Gangamayi* (novel); *Bendreyavara Kavyamimanse* (crit.); *The Captive*; *The Pretender* (poetry); is a member, Kannada Advisory Board, Sahitya Akademi

and Kannada Advisory Board, Bharatiya Jnanpith.

SUMATHINDRA NADIG (b. 1935) is teaching in Bangalore University; had been Professor of English, St. Xavier's College, Mapusa, Goa; and Senior Executive in a publishing firm; his published works include : *Nimma Premakumariya Jataka*; *Kappu Devate*; *Udghatane* (poetry); *Sahasa* (novels); *Karkotaka* (short stories); *M. Gopalakrishna Adiga*; *Ondu Kavyabhyasa* (criticism).

K. S. NARASIMHA SWAMY (b. 1915) has published *Upavana* (essay), *Mysore Mallige*, *Dipada Malli*, *Silalate*, *Manejinda Manege*, *Tereda Bagilu* (all poetry, last received the Sahitya Akademi award); has also won Karnatak Rajyotsava award and Karnatak State Sahitya Akademi award.

K. S. NISAR AHMED (b. 1936) teaches in Govt. Science College, Bangalore; his publications include *Manasu Gandhi Bazaar*; *Nenedavara Manadalli*; *Sanje Aidara Male*; *Nanemha Parakiya*; *Nityotsava*; *Svoyam Seveya Giligalu* (all poetry); has also published translations of Neruda's poems and Shakespeare's *Othello* & *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

CHANDRASEKHAR PATIL (b. 1939) is Lecturer in English, Karnatak University, Dharwar; and Editor *Sankramana*—a monthly; was jailed under DIR for writing anti-emergency poems and plays; his published works include *Bamili*, *Madhyabindu*, *Gandhi Smarane*, *O Enna Desha Bandhavare* (all poetry); *Jagadambeya Beedhi Nataka*; *Gokarnada Gaudashani* (plays).

SIDDHALINGA PATTANASHETTI (b. 1939) is Reader in Hindi, Karnatak College, Dharwar. His publications include *Neena*; *Aurangajeba mattu Itara Kavanagalu*; *Nuraru Padyagalu Pratikshe* (all poetry); *Mava* (short stories). He has also translated Saratchandra Chatterji's novels and plays of Mohan Rakesh and Dharmavir Bharati into Kannada.

A. K. RAMANUJAN (b. 1929) is Professor of Dravidian Studies and Linguistics : and Chairman, Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations, Chicago University, USA. An eminent poet, writing mainly in English, his works include *The Striders*, *Relations*, *The Interior Landscape*, *Speaking of Shiva*—the third has received Tamil Writers Association Gold Medal. Dr Ramanujan has written *Hokkulalli Huvilla* (poetry) and *Mattobbana Atma-charitre* (novel) in Kannada.

PEJAWAR SADASHIV RAO's *Varuna* is his only collection of poems.

RAMACHANDRA SHARMA (b. 1925) has published *Elu Suttina Kote*, *Hesaragatte*, *Neralu* (plays).

G.S. SHIVARUDRAPPA (b. 1926) is Professor and Director, Centre of Kannada Studies, Bangalore University; his publications include *Samagana*, *Deepada Hejje*, *Terada Dari*, *Theerthavani* (poetry), *Parisheelana*, *Gathibimba*, *Pratikriye*, *Kannada Sahitya Sameekshe* (criticism), *Karmayogi* (novel), *Nadasethu* (drama), *Moscowdalli 22 dina* (travelogue).

VENUGOPAL SORABA (b. 1937) teaches English in Rural College, Kanakapura ; has published *Musuku—Nasuku*, *Jiva-Jivanta*, *Savalu*, *Sullu-Buruki*, *Matai Barutale* (poetry); *Baylagada Jana*, *Anatha Prabhu* (novel) ; *Samudaya Mathu Raja Karana* (essays)

K. V. TIRUMALESH (b. 1940) is Reader at the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad ; has published *Mukhawadagalu*, *Vathara*, *Mahaparasthana Mukhamukhi* (poetry) ; *Nayaka mattu itararu* (short stories) ; *Aneka*, *Aropa* (novels) ; *Vyakti mattu Parampare* (essays).

MARATHI POETRY
Editor : PRABHAKAR MACHWE

Introduction to the First Edition

Two anthologies of Marathi poetry—*An Anthology of Marathi Poetry** and *Indian Poetry Today : Marathi*** are already available in English. In the first anthology there are twenty poets, in the second fourteen and both have some common ones. In preparing this third selections, I have chosen thirty poets, with a view to include some poets who were not included in the earlier two selections, both old and new, and whom I consider significant. All anthologies prone to be subjective and arbitrary ; the smaller in size, the more the exclusions. So I do not apologize for some significant poets not finding place here, partly because I felt one should avoid repetition. The limitation of pages and size were laid down by the publishers for a uniform series. The accent in my selections is on variety of modes and styles in experimentation ; and also on poets who are comparatively younger. I have also not bothered about the schools of thought to which these poets belong : some are romantic lyricists, others are neo-mystics ; some are social realists and Marxists and a few others are not so committed. I feel my selections fairly represent a cross-section of Marathi

* *An Anthology of Marathi Poetry* (1945-1965), edited and introduced by Dillip Chitre, Bombay, Nirmala Sadanand Prakashan.

** *Indian Poetry Today : Marathi*, translated by Prabhakar Machwe, Calcutta, Rupambra Prakashan.

poetry of the last two decades. Moreover limitations of translatability worked unconsciously as another reservation. I do not claim that these selections are the best or the final ones, nor that the translations cannot be improved upon. These are done by a mere Marathi reader like me, and so they obviously, do not have the advantage of the slant or bias of a creative writer in that language. I am also aware of my limitations that I might not have read all the best poems published during this period. But I can assure the readers that I have carefully read all the significant collections of Marathi poetry as well as journals, established ones and the little reviews, which published poetry, from 1948 to 1970. -

THE TRADITIONAL HERITAGE

Marathi is the language spoken by 33 millions in the state of Maharashtra on the west coast of India, formed in 1960 with Bombay as its capital. This Indo-Aryan language derived from Maharashtri Prakrit has a rich tradition of more than seven hundred years of poetry written in chiselled Sanskrit metres as well as in indigenous verse-forms. Great saint-poets like Dnyaneshwar and Namdev, Tukaram and Ramdas have left a glorious heritage of poetic achievement in epic and lyric forms. Very little of this rich fare is available in translation to other Indians not knowing Marathi, far less in English.

After a period of imitative and derivative versification by Pandit poets, copying the Sanskrit classical poets and enlarging upon or indulging in variations within the same gambit, one comes to a new upsurge of folk-poets in the days of Shivaji and later under the Peshwa regime. These bards and *shairs* were not erudite, nor did they refrain from using the folk idiom to give expression to their free and frank, uninhibited and passionate response to both the heroic and the erotic moods. The early romantics in the first three decades of this century are indebted to the vocabulary of these poets, mixed with Persian and Urdu borrowed words. So Govindagraja

or Ram Ganesh Gadkari and Madhav Julian or Madhav Trimbak Patwardhan wrote in Byronic and Keatsean strain. But the disillusionment had started setting in by the end of the thirties. Philosophical poets like Bee were carrying the tradition of earlier reflective lyrics. Keshavasut and his followers were also moving in the same line to combine social comment with a mystic cryptic form. Eknath's 'Bharud' has its later counterparts in Keshavasut's 'Zapurza' and Bee's 'Champha'. This new kind of deliberate ambiguity could not be achieved with the same intensity and popular response; though one finds its traces in P.S. Rege's latest poems or in Dilip Chitre's 'Hymn to Shakti'.

THE THIRTIES : INTERNAL QUEST

All worthwhile poetry has dual movement; it is like a double-edged sword which cuts within and without. "I have seen something which has split me into two"—the process of this unwanted but inevitable internal division had started in the thirties. V. D. Savarkar came back from Andamans and was interned in Ratnagiri. He had the power of an Iqbal, but unfortunately he frittered away his energy in politics and could not continue his early poetic fervour. He, in one way, indicates the hard core of Marathi idealist romantic poetry: many later poets could not get away from his word-magic. The unconscious unfulfilled desire of the Marathi common man was further very interestingly split into the parodies and lampooning of P.K. Atre and the sentimental oversimplification of Sane Gurufi. Though they were minor poets, yet they have a deep and wide range of influence on Marathi readers. Whenever one comes across a *powada* (folk-ballad) on Samyukta Maharashtra movement by the late Amar Shekh; or enjoys reading the limericks (*Vatratika*) by Mangesh Padgaonkar or the 'Kinchit' poems of Sadanand Rege and others; or reads a million copies of *Gita, Ramayana* by G.D. Madgulkar are sold out, and even Acharya Vinoba Bhave burst into tears listening to those syrupy lyrics—one is reminded of the basic

religious puritanic trait in the Marathi man, which could be fanned into any violent 'collective will' campaign and the Nietzsche-like worship of *Wille Zur Macht*.

All this may be considered extra-poetic, but it explains the attitude towards violence noticeable in the poetry written during the last Great War, at the time of partition and even after Gandhi's assassination. B. S. Mardhekar, anti-romantic and even surrealist at times, is the best exponent of this kind of pathological mood. He wrote little but whatever he did was extremely significant to Marathi poetry. After his premature death at the age of forty-nine in 1956, a new idiom was set in modern Marathi poetry. In any case the younger generation of poets did not remain the same after Mardhekar's meteoric appearance on the poetic scene. Even those who oppose his aesthetic theories, were and are obsessed by his Eliot-Pound like experimentation in verse. Out of the old guards A.R. Deshpande (Anil) and P. S. Rege still continue to write poetry, though very different in content and form. Both are included in this little collection. 'Anil' started as a 'progressive' but after writing long poems, in the austere classical analytical style soon came back to his original lyrically delicate mood. Rege started as a conscious formalist and his preoccupation with linguistic innovation is untranslatable. B. B. Borkar continued to stick to his lyrical filigree-like work à la Tambe.

SOCIAL PROTEST AND POETRY OF ANGER

In the forties Kusumagrag, J. Manmohan, V. R. Kant (author of *Rudra Vina* in its preface Prabhakar Padhye called him *sthandilvadi* poet, meaning a poet of fire, ritual and sacrifice), Vasant Bapat, Vinda Karandikar, Sharadchandra Muktibodh and others came to the front as poets of social protest. Some were socialists and participated in the August '42 movement; others were Marxists—even Communists—but now that wave has subsided. Excepting one or two like Narayan Surve hardly anyone is politically 'committed' poet.

Partly that explains the sterility in the poetic landscape. There are no great 'poets', though only a few great poems are occasionally written. This does not rule out the fact that there are many 'good' poets. But it is more or less true of all Indian languages : after poet Jibanananda Das in Bengali or poet Nirala in Hindi, or the poet Majar in Urdu one comes across the same scene of despair as after Mardhekar in Marathi. "Democracy leads to mediocracy", as Shaw said, and poetry is no exception.

With much of the storm and stress, fire and brimstone, spark and smoke having settled down, poetry is engaged in a more difficult and uphill task : to charter the inner tensions and probe into the irrational dark recesses of man's mind. Not all the psycho-analytical tools are quite adequate, nor are the results always wholesome. I have deliberately included some traditionally lyrical poems and in contrast given some very bold experimentations and modernistic topsy-turvy writing to give some feel of what is happening today in Marathi poetry. I am aware that my selections could have been improved or better translations could have been presented by more competent and well-versed persons. But I am attempting this essay in presenting another aspect, rather a glimpse of many other aspects, than whatever is so far generally known through English translations. The Marathi number of *Quest* edited by Nissim Ezekiel had some excellent translations, but now that number is dated. I hope more and better translations of modern Marathi poetry would follow.

I offer my heart-felt thanks to all friends who cooperated and I again submit with all humility that the more discerning readers will forgive me for all the omissions and transgressions. The notes are partly provided by the poets themselves.

PRABHAKAR MACHWE

VASANT BAPAT

If Return You Must

If return you must better go quickly
Don't hurt my heart like a lingering sweet night

When you come here again
Please forget that wrist-watch, that cage of minutes

Forget your smart cosmetics
Forget your slick-city morality, ironed and tip-top

Forget those flowers in the hair-do
Forget the delicate silken frills, forget the tinkling bangles

Forget, friend, the language of movement
Forget those tenses denoting time,
adjectives like quick and hasty

Come like the serene ocean-wave
Quivering, hiding, expectant innerself
Calmly, slow-intoxicated.

Translated by PRABHAKAR MACHWE

VASU BHAGAT

Search

The day is lost,
the stream of my mind—
my consciousness—has gone numb

Inside mind
the inscrutable
triangular and square labyrinth

The quicksilver of faith
from the mind has evaporated—
all this attempt to catch it, futile

This jumble in the mind
is not straightened

One does not get to the depths of this feeling
I do not know
Where to go
Where stop for rest

Today my turn
To search someone blindfolded
but I do not know whom to search

Translated by PRABHAKAR MACHWAL

B. B. BORKAR

Even Now, As You Smile, O Dear

Even now, as you smile, O dear
 this old banyan sports new sprouts
and from the burning stone
 the frozen mercury drops
Even now, as you smile, O dear
 the ocean-lyre sounds in the sky
and dreams are gilded with
 the quicksilver of the starry heavens
Even now, as you smile, O dear
 there is a sudden shower of pearls
the lamp of my heart brightens
 the soot on the wick drops down
Even now, as you smile, O dear
 the moonlight buried in the crevice laughs
In the empty ring of the vacant moments
 the old wounds are be-studded like diamonds
Even now, as you smile, O dear
 autumn meets its honeyed moon
In the milky ocean of mysterious emotions
 the tide of associations is arisen

Even now, as you smile, O dear
my poetic reason is awakened
In the dark night of *amāvasyā*
the moonlight of *Ras* meets the soul

Translated by PRABHAKAR MACHWE

VASANT ABAJI DAHAKE

A Tangram

Mao Mao Mao Mao Mao

Mao Mao Mao Mao Mao

Mao Mao Mao Mao Mao

Mao Mao *CHINA* Mao Mao

Mao Mao Mao Mao Mao

Mao Mao Mao Mao Mao

Mao Mao Mao Mao Mao

From the little magazine CHAKRAVARTI

A. R. DESHPANDE (ANIL)

Companion

Who are you ?
to clasp my hand
in your grip
and walk me as you will
Why ? oh, why ?
no matter where I go
you are an accompanist

Do I like you ?
dislike ?—
I have no clue
But
this much feel I do,
thus caught in a vice
made to walk at your will
I cannot at all stand
Can't you see it leaves me—
manacled bruised—
on a fitful choice ?

So
I fling your hand away

and running go
 far from you
 jump and play
 stumble, struggle,
 come tumbling down
 But oh me,
 you are there to see
 the pitying you behind
 That is how
 I feel the pain
 for nothing shriek and cry
 Believe me, when you are not
 looking
 and I fall, get hurt
 up I rise, start it all
 over again
 with éclat

Why must you like this,
 your hand
 on my shoulder ever fixed ?
 It stunts my growth
 pigmies me, I feel
 This acting
 and equating
 me with you
 Is it true ?
 Pray
 let me be at ease
 alone, by myself
 allow me to be tall
 let my height increase
 if not more
 at least to yours

Till then let me move
your hands off
stand at distance
keep my head erect
let me dare, boldly stare
at Y O U...

Translated by the POET and PRABHAKAR MACHWE

GUNAKAR DESHPANDE

Rainy Night

A rainy night—
an indistinct whistle
in the showers that rain
In the blowing wind
there is a pricking edge—
the slumberous restlessness
is physically wet,
the sky dim
behind the clouds that gather,
the half-distinct stars
are of a pale pallor
Behind the stagnant tears,
is her love
A rainy night

Translated by PRABHAKAR MACHWE

M. M. DESHPANDE

On the Closed Door of the Mind

On the closed door of the mind
We both stand
On doorstep, sitting
in front of the closed door
Like neighbours in a city
we converse
and so are we deceived, and deceive...

Somebody within you
looks all very intently
from the bars of a nearby window
Somebody within me
is standing—eaves-dropping near the door
—On the closed doors
we are standing, conversing like this
for whole life-times.

Translated by PRABHAKAR MACHWE

N. G. DESHPANDE

Pain Within Me

Dark, jet-black night
Her twinkling
deaf eyes above.
Below on barren earth
one palm standing
muttering in its leaves
their tragic manifesto.

For the visible proximity
A cow quietly
standing ruminating
watching the darkness
And in between
nibbling at
dwarfish dry hay

A flutter of wings
a struggling sound
the palm quivered
Through its heart
a shrieking shrill bird
went cutting across the darkness

My eyes are swollen
I could not close them
It is four o'clock
O fellow-traveller
what tale shall I tell
 Ask the palm
about the pain within me

Translated by PRABHAKAR MACHWE

RAJA DHALE

Window

I

When he goes away from below her window
Her being turned into a dancing peacock. She becomes
of the size of the window and all over the window
with all soul in the eyes, of the size of the eyes and all over
eyes

And when he goes away far...beyond sight.
Vague anxiety in all directions...she feels
If these windows turned to his direction are like a
sunflower...

II

And when in the vacant window space peeps
She stands at a distance and opens the door
Of the inner window of her mind and he passes
always before it window-full, eyefull...her
being is a peacock-feather with a blinded eye
looking straight into the space all over...closed to oneself
and opened to oneself the inner window door

III

She has a square knowledge of him through the window...
 the colour and demeanour of his dress...the timings of his
 going and coming...quick steps...askance fixed gaze at the
 window

IV

One day she thinks whether while going and coming
 While he looks at this window, how can one judge
 Whether it is underlined on this window or for me ?
 So to test she goes away from the window and
 While she wants to fade out, his fixed gaze becomes
 Concentrated in the same direction...his eyes grope
 in the dark and a million lights of joy are on
 in her mind and he becomes newly meaningful to herself
 Like a sunflower his movements are tied with hers
 by a subtle thread in a strange new bond
 Then she realizes that in the window of his eye
 She is the only one. A million bonds are on in her mind
 She appears to him a newly meaningful stranger.

Translated by PRABHAKAR MACHWE

GURUNATH DHURI

Black Dot, Yellow Petals

Under a melting yellow Sun
I wander
on the dense yellow grassy lawn
wee, black, naked.

I want to net
yellow dark butterflies on the grass
eyes allured, lost
the grass is lost
everywhere mere butterflies
an unlimited swarm of butterflies
silently sipping
the strong music of a dark earth

My eyes thirsting
turn unknowingly towards the Sun
and suck and empty the Sun in seconds
every sense organ blooms gratified
Eyes shut
I see
Unknown songs blossoming in the blood

Around my black dot
blossoming the song of dark yellow petals

Upwards
the tempted butterfly of the Sun

Translated by PRABHAKAR MACHWE

MANIK GODGHATE (GRACE)

My Holy Moments

The lamp-flame was out
on the swing of the slow breeze
O my holy moments
flow to the shadow of ages.
Flow to the shadow of ages
the night is muttering hysterically
to drink darkness her lips
are an open flickering line
Open blossoming line
Pain sits upon back
eyes thirst and
the skies press down on
O my holy moments
skies press down on the pillow
But the rebirth beyond
is, to it joined by the breeze.

Translated by PRABHAKAR MACHWE

RAM GOSAVI

The Crows

When a wound-scab of the sky
Is at a perishable stage
And a sleep-clasp of the tired limb
Is at a wet-stage in honey
Then crows caw
And for a break of sleep are abused
from happy sleepers
But I thank the crows
and express hearty thanks to them
The blackish curtain of wordless, terrible darkness
Their terrifying sharp sound
It's really a light house for me
The furious, fearful waves of darkness
With a universal visible appearance
Unrelated
They tell my misfortuned life
Don't fear
The shore is near
A spirited lighted shore.

Translated by V.P. THONTE

WAMAN INGLE

X Algebraic

A successor of amoeba
with human physique
His clothes as rough
as those of any real or fake patriot
Children say he looked like Subhash Bose
But in old age like Karl Marx.
He never looked like himself.
(only while dying he looked like a cadaver
when he felt like sneezing he sneezed
but it was never photographed and blacked out in the
newspaper)
He had lots of errands
All his errands ought be fulfilled
so he said, this means his
(and people's) work was completed.
Later such twenty-two carat mean would be reached
God had said so
If God had said it by mistake
He is a lying astrologer (he knew it)
His tendency was to stick all the time
like TB germs.
Samyukta Maharashtra. Naga Vidarbha.

Bi-lingual. Punjabi Suba.
 Trade Unions and labour unrest.
 Everywhere his presence was requested
 like the non-attached and omnipresent Almighty.
 (children call him the bug in the pillar)
 Somebody's buffalo is to give birth
 Somebody's permit
 Somebody's admission
 Third person's bonus (obstruction.. why not ?)
 National anxieties are all his
 (children say : his anxieties are all national)
 And so all this must be done
 What was that which he did not know ?
 Morarji's cough,
 What honey Vinoba Bhave eats,
 the yawn of S.K. Patil, the tongue of Menon's mothertongue
 all these secrets were known to him or his God.
 These days he was very well-off.
 Much better than what was before '47.
 Like monsoon arriving regularly
 every year there were elections
 He was the opening batsman,
 the speaker before the meetings started.
 Yesterday he quit.
 Children say he did not leave behind
 any child or debt.
 He never begged nor was he given anything.
 He is a subject of research for historians.
 In his bag are left
 The unfilled forms of a political sufferer
 (without affidavit)

Translated by PRABHAKAR MACHWE

PRAKASH KAMTIKAR

That Which Was

That which was, as it was, was of the past
Where it was, there it was, it was as it was
Now was it ? Where was it ?
There were many mad questions in the heart
There was cloudiness of the memories lost
at a time at a place
The Moon was there, there was the sky
The storm-mad horizon was there
That which was, as it was, it was there as it was
It was mine, was aloof from me
There was the sky full of cry
As it was, it was as it was
The whole life was full of lost dice
Some were there, some were not
Hard were the days
That which was, as it was, was of the past
How was it...?
Who can tell...the whole life was a mocking-stock

Translated by SHIVAJI GAULKAR

V.R. KANT

A Flint Has Sparked

A flint has sparked in the mind of the Earth
A candle been lit in the dark continent
In that pencil of light
Hisses the bloody lustre of the jewel on the snake's
 hood
The dots of death shine in lion's eyes.
But, Wind, stop
Don't blow so fiendishly.
Maybe these lights would twine into witch's torches
Forest-fires start from reindeer horns
Wind, halt
A flint has sparked in the mind of the Earth.

In the equatorial belt
This land is born from Sun's seed
Who is reading, leaning, in the fog of centuries
Beyond dark jungles,
the slanted and stony alphabet of
Mysterious fearful pyramids
Trying to decipher the meaning of stifled breathing
And flowing blood, who is sitting
In the lidless eyes of the Sphinx ?

Have the footprints in the sand,
 Of slaves dragged by chains
 Found the rhythm of resistance ?
 A flint has sparked in the mind of the Earth.

The sand-dunes of barren deserts have become pregnant
 Around this forests' blazing cauldrons
 Dancing in ecstasy
 Half-naked black mahogany limbs
 Precipices of prime in black marble
 Dark dreams of the black clouds of rainy nights :
 Grass skirts moving in rounds
 In their conch-shell earrings oceans are ringing
 the drums of the horizon beat
 In coral garlands the sun's molten fire is poured
 And to this cauldron a human eye is grown
 Like a white and black *cowrie*
 A flint has sparked in the mind of the Earth.

Mohammad's camel-grazing sword-blades came here
 Returned thirsty
 the pages of the Koran on their backs flew
 Pine-forests ate them away
 Christ's lamb too came here
 In the fight between the sword and the balance
 Forgot the Cross !
 With the hands of the Ganges and the shade of the
 Himalayas
 A lean and lanky person came here ;
 He lited his first light in this land
 the peaceful flame of Truth—*Satyagrah*
 (the molten fires of the desert sound in the mind of the
 Himalayas)
 On the banks of the Ganges and Yamuna
 On the banks of the southern seas
 the same light is shining
 A flint has sparked in the mind of the Earth.

Beyond the seven seas
In the skyscrapers and palaces of glass-steel words
O who are sporting with the fireworks
Look at this Earth
the sharpness of Washington's axe of freedom
Is going to be tested here
Vows of Lincoln's equality
Are going to be completed on Congo coast
The Mahatma's wounded evening-prayer
Enlarging itself more than life-size
Will eclipse the solar system rising from this land
A flint has sparked in the mind of the Earth.

Translated by PRABHAKAR MACHWE

VINDA KARANDIKAR

The Hymn of Vajra

I was standing alone watching a million skeletons on the
march
The skeletons were alive, they were moving
The skeletons were alive, they were walking
Their left feet were lifted but not yet put down on the
ground
their right feet were behind them but not yet lifted
When the front one goes to the front, the back one
remains at the back
I was standing alone watching a million skeletons on the
march

They were standing—there itself—watching the marching
of a million thoughts
My thoughts walked, my thoughts moved ;
I was thinking because I was measuring
I was thinking because I was weighing
I was thinking about thoughts, through thoughts
At the bend of thoughts one herd was turning
I was walking alone watching a million skeletons on the
march

These skeletons were to meet these skeletons, they
had not met,
Those skeletons were to fight with those skeletons,
they had not fought,
When thought meets reality, there is no bloodshed
Only from the horizon a black cloud of icy fear is
freed
When thoughts are injected into thoughts, they become
embodied like vajra
Million skeletons stand watching the march of a
million skeletons.

Translated by PRABHAKAR MACHWAL

CHANDRAKANT KHOT

God : Two Moods

I

Where were you when the breezes burnt ?
Where were you when Surangi was widowed ?
When Gurudutt broke, where were you ?
When on the house of the *mimosa indica*
365 rocks fell, where were you ?
When hell was rising in the wound of Ashwathama
Where were you ?
Where were you ?
Where were you ?

...Where must you be ?
You denied your being ;
With Vishwamitra's hands
You threw away your existence;
By being an atheist...Yourself.

II

I saw
Milk rushing to your existence

When I saw the breasts of your grace on the *shevaga* tree
I caught you in my fingers, but you slipped away
With the feet of a bug; formless
You were without apparel
At the time of my first love-act
You can with the blessing of rice *akshatā*
In my son's marriage
You were the pyre on the day of death
When my friend, a, who was born blind
Began to recognize me by my breath...
Were you in her eyes ?
Unseen.

Translated by PRABHAKAR MACHWE

KAREKAR VIJAY KRISHNAJI

The Great Masters...

The great masters have tried their hand ?
At the Pegasus—myth

Their pens managed to stir
only the dust of words,

In the hectic mess wintered
The leaves of meaning

But how can this be
the end of it all ?

The limbs have slipped from the horse
And the might still yearns for the touch

Translated by ARUN BHAGWAT

VASUDHA MANE

Spring

Someone gave me the news
Doors opened, Spring came, came, put on yellow clothes

I took the nearest mango-blossoms
and decked my hair, putting them on the ears
I wore anklets and bracelets
and put collyrium in the eyes and wore a nosering

I came out the door
and lo, an old hunchback
there stood with a colour-filled piston
He laughed a grotesque laugh and said :
I am the same Spring.
Come, come play Holi.

Translated by PRABHAKAR MACHWE

KESHAV (TANAJI) MESHRAM

We Burn

We are burning in all our pleasures and pains,
Stifled in the all and everywhere smoke-clouds
This dry tree is strangely living,
Apparently all bark is dried, though green within
They keep every pie well tied, calculatingly make friends
Business transaction in kind, on hand sweet pie
They go to sympathize if there is some common cold,
grave-faced
"What a fussy fellow, advertises every small grievance!"
Caressing the smouldering wishes within self
Everything has to be so arranged, then one may get a lift
One has to pay the price in some way or the other
No one knows anything, the powerful boss is pleased thus
He makes all kinds of arrangements for the devotees
We burn as if the old spirit is being gulped and burns the
throat
We only defend our bones, these old hollow logs of our
home
Anyone may enter our coverlet or sleeping-bag and claw us
While green, become white ants and burrow within
We wriggle through every bark. We burn.

Translated by PRABHAKAR MACHWE

SHARADCHANDRA MADHAV MUKTIBODH

Sky, Only Sky

Sitting in a corner he went on writing
around him there was sky, only sky

On the side of the footpath under the shade in stupor
he would suddenly berd and light a cigarette
sky, only sky would flow on both his sides

at last, being filled fully with green leaves
he got up. He sighed and stood up
pushed his white brows, he began to shout anxiously
sky, only sky was flowing on all sides.

...he was suddenly embarrassed...words were coming
from a distance

Yes, his own words...but with a new edge.

He started struggling trying to swim through the sky
pushing it with both hands

Cutting sky, only sky...sky and more sky...

Translated by PRABHAKAR MACHWE

MANOHAR OAK

*Patanmals Shalibanda | Peraina Golkonda**

A mirror, O lady
A mirror would be laid
We plant a bone on the mirror
Some flesh on the bone
We shall play nerves and arteries
Checkmate and counter checkmate
On all this let us spread the skin smoothly
O lady, it shall be coloured
On the skin, cotton would be wrapped
Let us wear the underwears
O lady, let us have the underpants
We shall put on the hanging pyjamas of the caste
We shall put on the buttons of nations and religions
We shall have the embroidery of culture
O lady, we shall have the golden thread
Of ideologies we shall put on the caparison
O lady, how well it hangs
Bugoo Bugu Bugu Bugu O Nandi, the bull,
Now nod
O lady, the bull nods

Translated by PRABHAKAR MACHWE

- * It is a meaningless line uttered by the travelling soothsayers to make the bull nod. When he nods, it is supposed to be answering the question in the affirmative.

MANGESH PADGAONKAR

The Night Did Not Stop At All

You said—'Stop', yet
the night stopped not at all
Like unknown birds
in an unknown land
the fleeting touch
of a half-acquainted feather
plaintive, lingering
remained behind ..

You said... 'Stop', yet
the night stopped not at all...
the sensitive glass of the mist
was breaking, one felt
and through that seen, scattered—
mysterious Japanese hand-fan
with strong coloured pictures
It opened on the horizon
.. only to melt away...

You said—'Stop', yet
the night stopped not at all...
the delicate sleep, pitcher of the night
filled with the waters of dream—Yamuna

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was emptied once again,
the cowherd maidens of trees
were hidden in veils of darkness,
I learnt that they were not there !

Both realized
the trees were trees
Old night of branches
and green leaves—
sprouted to drop post-ripeness.

Translated by PRABHAKAR MACHWE

RAJANI PARULEKAR

I Met Some Such

I met some such whose swords were in their sheaths
But who were stark naked

And so with naked swords
Your hands revolving in the air
Looked like the dramatic gestures
Of women who fight pulling each other's hair.

Your strategem of undoing the enemy
By attaching a pin to the chair
Is the younger sister of the child's plan
To teach a lesson to the teacher by spreading itching
powder

Really, if only they had loved
In return for enmity, it would have been meaningful
Even in one's defeat they must have made
The victor as the feudal lord
At age twenty-five, a man ought to laugh so foolishly
I feel like giving a juicy abuse from the street
After chewing the Poona-masala pan he better walk like a
eunuch
I doubt their basic masculinity.

Translated by PRABHAKAR MACHWE

PRASANNAKUMAR PATIL

Goodbye

If charity it was you wanted to perform, why did you do it
so oddly

Why did you not seek my approval, tell O God,
while giving me birth

Why did you give me these tiny hands and why did
you tempt me to distant blue spaces, horizons

When there was no destination, why did you unnecessarily
make me walk all this way

Tell God, tell, why did you take me round through
the street of these whores

I did not want your palace, why did you put me to
rot in this slum

What lecherous moment was it, when you gave me
streets, streets as the parent

How can the people on street become street-builders

God where shall you be redeemed of the sin

Come O God of *Gita*, come, come from *Bible*, *Koran* and
the *Jataka*-tales

And see with your eyes open, your world is dissected
in the many map colours

You were supposed to smile in these buds and fair
children, in black hard soil

How do you witness this daily slaughter of yours,
O God, in black and white difference
This business and higgling going on in your name in
every nook and corner on every platform and forum
When shall this Vatican city, this Shringeri, this
Dwarka, this (naraka) Puri be destroyed
I am singing the songs of these hungry, starved, restless
poor souls, of the Ashwathama begging for oil
O bluffer of a God, hiding behind locked doors !
bye-bye !
At high-noon there is a barricade

Translated by PRABHAKAR MACHWE

RAMESHCHANDRA NARAYAN PATKAR

Poem Consoling Her

I

The silken WELCOME on the pillow
is thrown to the skies by someone.
Cloud-bird closed-winged
Swam in welcome
somebody broke a bottle of whisky
on the head of the cloud;
he was drunk and sneezed
rain all over the hill.
Somebody fixed a drop of lemonade
on the wall
Have you ever heard it being accosted as
Sun-God ?
You laugh ? Shall I tell you ? I have done all this.

II

Once I felled all the trees in the jungle
Ripped them, fixed nails, made bookshelves.
Near the window, near the door, every room was decorated
All money finished. What to do ?

One day I sold off all the books
and again sat in the dry room tired

Pensive :

How to give back all the chipped wood back to the trees ?

Translated by PRABHAKAR MACHWE

ARTI PRABHU

Goodbye

Light?
Darkness?
Forest?
Footpath?
Rice-bowl?
Roof?
Money?
What first?
Power?
Servant?
Car?
Icecream?
How much will you eat?
Bungalow?
Pillow?
Pride?
No marriage?
Why, sir?
Female?
Wine?
Hallowin?
Diwali?

Neither—nor
More or less
Nor rest
Jagannath
Hands ready !
Yes, we goof?
Go to hell!
What not?
this minute!
Why not?
Very fine!
Dream!
How much will yon feed?
Very good
Simple
with a dimple
A cage
Get out!
First sale
Mine!
Will do
Kick off

Think?
 Hero?
 Heroine ?
 Joker hey?
 What d'want?
 Leader?
 For the corpse?
 Jagannath ?
 Garlands and bouquets?
 Phoolbagh?
 Will you sing?
 Death?
 Phone?
 Yama!
 Hulloo!
 Do you want all?
 I give
 Get up
 Conditions
 Listen Bud
 I would give
 Keep to queue
 What will you have ?

Better sink
 Let him die
 May be mine
 Sugar hey!
 What a'nt !
 Better keep to the lane
 The shoulder is ready
 My hand
 Am I dead
 Run away
 Will you go?
 A-one
 Who?
 Come!
 Coming
 Why not ?
 I take
 Be quick
 Oh!
 No
 Mus' you?
 Thank you
 Goodbye!

Translated by PRABHAKAR MACHWE

RAJA RAJWADE

Songs of Sorrow

They say don't sing songs of sorrow
They say their sleep is disturbed
(to speak the truth sleep flies) so they
Think loud slogans as botheration.

They are afraid of songs of sorrow
Because in those songs there is a tune
Which will arouse the dead forest...will excite music
So they like delicate sound-play
Embroidered lyrics a soapy glossy feelings
They say don't sing songs of sorrow
Their liquid mood is disturbed
The wet and evanescent mystery
Blossoming on the bed, hanging in the sky, is scattered.

They come running to throttle
The poet who sings songs of sorrow
They say "he is a rebel amongst poets
He is cutting with sickle the gossamer dreams !"

Even then he sings ; songs of sorrow
Those who are alive, their eyes are bedewed.

Translated by PRABHAKAR MACHWE

P.S. REGE

One Word

One word is more than two lips
Two lips than four steps
Watching all this distance
and enduring it.

Subtracting one by one pictures in reserve
One has to be consoled thus;
The subtracted doubles
Are re-added.

Wise experts may tell more
Some may tell something new
How can one calculate it as nil
Who knows ?

Translated by PRABHAKAR MACHWE

SADANAND REGE

Horses

An alloy of iron and bronze
Brushes a menstruating mane against the Sun...

Eagle's wings blaze out in the feet
Controlling a sky that slips out of a bowl of sound...

The stag from the moon stands on the cliff of the eyes
Caressing the downy storm in the blood...

A prolific neighing cracks the sky open
And a jewel gleams in the raised hood of the fifth note.

Translated by DILIP CHITRE

INDIRA SANT

I Drowned You

One who listens...you
One who understands...you
so I lived with you
so I said

Something slight and meaningless
Unburdened the heart innocently
With the upturned nose of intellect
and with a derisive guffaw
you said

"Will you tell me often measuring
the depths...of the shallowness!"
—there was a lump in my throat
the pond was dark...of shallowness
came black water and touched
the collyrium

And I drowned you
in the same pond
with all thine dry and high
snowy peak.

Translated by PRABHAKAR MACHWE

SHANTA J. SHELKE

Realization

When the rugged black stone
realized
the beautiful icon in its heart
when it knew
that it was Icon.
It began to shed particles
day and night.
And when the bamboo
realized
"I am the pipe "
holes burst from its body
suddenly
and dreams echoed in the form
of six notes.
It lost its rootedness
from that moment onwards

Translated by PRABHAKAR MACHWE

F. M. SHINDE

A Scene

Recently the first scene is over !
I am an actor...I am the observer :
Standing myself inside Me.
Dialogues of tears recorded, tattooed on cheeks.
In your absence
All soliloquies have you to know !
If you have craving enter in the Last scene
My wounds will be gushing from the Death-wish;
But don't pull the curtain
Only with your trembling hands...

I am Awaiting

Each season is disloyal to my Muse
When your eyes have sown the Future
unconsciously
I felt, the sensations of impoverished weather accept
The dream-editors in your eyelids?
I am awaiting for whatever will spring forth.....
Worry not
The darknes is pregnant !

Translated by V.P. THONTÉ

V. V. SHIRWADKAR (KUSUMAGRAJ)

Secret

I have to say a thing,
but shall not
At the door of the temple
I shall not weigh faith

Within me the fragrance
of the heavenly tree
But its petals
would never really blossom
I have found the secret
in the names of the stars
But it would not get
the touch of letters
Cloud purple lonely
at the border of the sky
Its secret will not
be known to anyone
In the distant harbour
a silver ship waits
Its treasures would never
touch the shore

With your kind grace
I own the forest-fire
I would never burn thee
in its embers.

Translated by PRABHAKAR MACHWE

NARAYAN SURVE

My Mother

When stars go off
Tall chimney-sirens sound
Daily with fast steps
Marching to the mill
who looked backwards
And told us lovingly
"Fight with no one"
Gave us two pice

A day before Dussera
She went with the five of us
To see the festival
We bantered in the lanes
What great pleasure
Beyond words
We returned with balloons
And whistles and pipes
We became birds

What happened one day
They brought her in a cart
Her eyes were open

Blood gushed from her mouth
Her partner Salu
Came near, caressed us and said 'Babu'
We mutely saw everything
We searched our umbrella
Our roof, our mother.

That night we five
Stuck closer together and
Wrapped up to the coverlet
Taking it to be mother's affection
Already we had nothing
Now there was no mother even
We kept awake the whole night
Bolting the tears
Now we became fully unattached.

Translated by PRABHAKAR MACHWE

MEENA TAKAKHAV

Burning Fan

You have the alchemy
to make flowers blossom through burning fans
this burning moving fan
six seasons danced.

The autumn snow
the summer sun
equally pleasant
the body thrilled into
the wet fragrance of *parijatak* flower.

The butterflies suddenly flitted
one sat on the nose
one on the hair
imparting the warmth
of silken touch.

The butterflies flew
within, hesitant, covetable,
fluttering in the closed hand.
Ten directions filled with colour
dripping with grace,
sprouted, jostled,
there was a struggle to catch and keep
those illusions,

to drink them through eyes
to search the unknown
to rear it up,
in catching the colours stuck to the hands
how fine !
The fan went on burning
with a bloom of dry, old thorns

Translated by PRABHAKAR MACHWE

RAMESH TENDULKAR

Festival

That festival there
 remained far away
Unseen here memories flooded
there the decorations
 here mere longing
there ecstatic mirth
 here only frustration
those notes
 still ring in the ears
How has not the water
 yet come to it senses
the sky echoes
 in the bamboo island
where does this road
 lead beyond the dream ?
Darkness burning
 like saffron fire
And your own way
 becomes the harder for you.....
That festival there
 remained far away
Unseen here
 just one ankle-bell

Translated by PRABHAKAR MACHWE

Notes on Poets

VASANT BAPAT (b. 1922) is an actor, singer, critic; is also a very good orator and reciter of poems; has represented India at an international poets meet in Yugoslavia; presently Tagore Professor of Comparative Literature, Bombay University; has published *Bijali*, *Setu*, *Akaravi Disa*, *Sakina* (all poetry, second received Maharashtra State Poetry Award); *Balagovinda* (play, received Maharashtra State Children's Play Award); *Bara Gavache Panl* (trav.).

VASU BHAGAT (b. 1937) has worked in films and TV films; was connected with theatre as writer, producer, or an actor; written *Vasavadutta*, *Jungle Kabootar*, *Niyatte* (plays); has translated from Hindi *Patthar-al-Patthar* and *Gharonda*.

B.B. BORKAR (b. 1910) is formerly a teacher, now writing; has written *Painzanam*, *Geetai*, *Pratibha*, *Ananda Bhalravl*, *Chitra Veena*, *Chaitra Punav* (all poetry); recipient of the Padma Shri, Tamrapatra, Saraswat Ratna, Maharashtra State Award and Goa, Daman & Diu Kala Academy Award.

VASANT ABAJI DAHAKE (b. 1942) is Professor of Marathi, Elphinstone College, Bombay; has written novels, and poetry.

ATMARAM RAOJI DESHPANDE (Anil) (b. 1901) served as lawyer and Judge; Chairman, Debt Conciliation Board of

Wardha Dist. ; in-charge of social education in former Madhya Pradesh ; Special Officer ; social education in Community Development Administration ; founder Director, National Fundamental Education Centre, GOI ; and as Adviser on Social Education to GOI ; one of the pioneers of free verse ; his publications include *Phulwat Bhagnamurti*, *Perteva* and *Sangati* which won for him the Nehru Literary Award and the Sahitya Akademi Award.

GUNAKAR DESHPANDE (b. 1930) is Reader in Poona University ; his Marathi poems have a special charm of Vidarbha lyricism.

M.M. DESHPANDE (b. 1929) has published poems in *Wangmay Shobha* ; also published *Vanphool* ; received Keshavsut Award.

N. G. DESHPANDE is a poet and critic ; presently President of Vidarbha Sahitya Sammelan.

GURUNATH DHURI (b. 1942) is a short story writer and poet ; has published *Balmanache Dukh* (a collection of short stories).

MANIK GODGHATE (pseudonym : Grace ; b. 1937) is writing poetry since 1956 ; has received State award for his collection of poems—*Sandhyakalchya Kavita*.

RAM GOSAVI (b. 1926) has published *Dole* (The Eyes), *Andharban* and *Antar Vedh* ; has won the Keshavsut Prize of Maharashtra Govt.

WAMAN INGLE started writing poetry since 1965; has published two novels, a collection of short stories and a book of criticism on music.

PRAKASH KAMTIKAR (b. 1943) is a short-story writer, poet, essayist, novelist and critic; has written *Swapnagandha* (essay), *Shabdooli* (short story), *Shreyankit* (edited), *Mahadbochi Diwali* and *Pratichi* (novels); has edited *Vividha*—a literary magazine.

V. R. KANT (b. 1912) has published poems, translations, and dramas; has received Maharashtra Govt. Award for his poem "Velanti".

G. V. KARANDIKAR (Vinda Karandikar) (b. 1918) is former Professor of English at SIES College of Arts and Science Bombay; has been honoured with the Soviet Land Nehru award, Govt. of India, Ministry of Education prize, Maharashtra State Award, Critics award of Lalit Paritoshak Samiti; and senior Fulbright award; his publications include: *Mrudgandha*, *Dhrupad*, *Ajabkhana* (poetry); *Raja Lear* (translation of Shakespeare's *King Lear*); *Akashacha Artha* (essays); *Aristotatche Kavyashastra* (translation of Aristotle's poetics).

CHANDRAKANT KHOT (b. 1940) is a Publisher and Editor of a magazine; has published *Martik* (a collection of poems) and *Ubhayanyayi Avyay* (novel).

KAREKAR VIJAY KRISHNAJI is a Lecturer in Philosophy, S. P. College, Pune; has published *Mee Sury-Mukta*; has also contributed to various journals and magazines.

VASUDHA MANE (b. 1933) is folklorist, essayist and journalist ; has published *Govyatil Dhalo* (Goan folk-songs) ; presently Executive Editor of *Anand*—juvenile monthly

KESHAV (TANAJI) MESHRAM (b. 1937) is Head, Department of Marathi, M.D. College, Parel, Bombay ; has published *Utkhanan*, *Jugalbandi*, *Akasmāt* (collections of poems); *Hakikat and Jatayu*, *Pokharan* (novels); *Kharwad*, *Patrawal* (short stories) ; *Samanvaya*, *Shabdangana* (crit.), *Chayaban*, *Rutleli Manase* (literary essays) ; *Satpudyatil Khajina* (children stories) ; has received Kavi Keshavsut Award, H.N. Apte award and Maharashtra State Govt. award.

SHARADCHANDRA MADHAV MUKTIBODH (b. 1921) is formerly Professor of Marathi, Nagpur Mahavidyalaya ; has received Parvekar Prize of Vidarbha Sahitya Sangh and Maharashtra Govt. award for his collection of poems *Navl Malwat* and *Yatrik* (poems); and Sahitya Akademi award for *Sristhi*, 'Saundarya' ani-Sahityamulya—a criticism ; his other publications include *Kshipra*, *Jan he Volatu Jethe* (novels) ; and *Kahi Nibandh* (essays).

MANOHAR OAK (b. 1933) is a freelancer ; has four publications to his credit : *Ayatya Kavita*, *Kavita-Pablo Neruda*, *Vartaman* (all poetry) and *Antarvedhi* (novel).

MANGESH PADGAONKAR (b. 1929) is formerly Justice of the Peace, Maharashtra Govt., and Professor of Marathi in two colleges in Bombay ; is presently Marathi Editor for US International Communication Agency, Bombay ; has established himself as a poet with his own individual idiom ; author of *Dharanritya* and *Gypsy*, *Salam*, *Chori*,

Utsav, Sharmistha ; has received the Maharashtra State award and Sahitya Akademi award.

RAJANI PARULEKAR (b. 1945) has over forty to fifty poems to his credit.

PRASANNAKUMAR (SIDA GUNDA) PATIL (b. 1940) has published 150 poems ; has written *Andhar-phule*.

RAMESHCHANDRA NARAYAN PATKAR (b. 1939) is a poet, playwright, painter ; published more than 40 poems.

ARTI PRABHU (b. 1930) has published two books of poems ; five novels ; one collection of short stories ; four plays ; his play *Ek Shunya Bajirao* has received many awards and has been translated into several languages.

RAJA RAJWADE (b. 1936) works as Chief Public Relations Officer with CIDCO, Bombay ; has published 42 novels in Marathi ; has also written short stories, poems and books for children ; scripted one Marathi film.

P.S. REGÉ (b. 1910) is a retired Professor of Economics and Principal, Elphinstone College, Bombay ; has published *Himasekh, Gandhrekha, Pushkala, Rekha, Dola, Priyal* (poems); *Savitri, Avalokita, Renu, Matraku* (novels).

SADANAND REGÉ is a short-story writer, poet, translator, composer of children's verses ; winner of the Soviet Land Nehru award ; has taught English at Ramnarain Rina College, Bombay.

INDIRA SANT (b. 1914) is a poet, short-story writer ; has published *Sahawas*, *Shela*, *Mendi*, *Mrijala*, *Rangabawari*, *Bahulya*, *Garbhareshim* (poems) ; *Shamali*, *Kadall* and *Chaltu* (stories) ; recipient of the Maharashtra State award.

SHANTA J. SHELKE is a poet, short-story writer, and novelist ; a Professor of Marathi. has written *Varsha*, *Rupashri*, *Kondan* (poems).

F. M. SHINDE (b. 1948) is a Professor of Marathi, Deogiri College, Aurangabad ; has published three works ; *Julus*, *Adim* (both poetry) and *Swant* (criticism).

V.V. SHIRWADKAR (Kusumagraj) (b. 1912) is a novelist, playwright but essentially a poet ; his early *Jivan-lahari* showed his humanist socialist commitment, but *Vishaka*, his second collection in 1942 made him immortal ; his other collections of poems are *Kinara* and *Samidha* ; has received the Sahitya Akademi award for his play *Nata Samrat*.

NARAYAN SURVE (b. 1926) has published *Aisa Ga Mi Brahma*, *Maze Vidyapith* and *Jahirnama* (all poems).

MEENA TAKAKHAV's poems have appeared in *Abiruchi*, *Chhand* and *Satyakatha*.

RAMESH TENDULKAR (b. 1945) has published over forty poems in several magazines.



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